

Modernizing Hong Kong Buddhism:

The Case of the Chi Lin Nunnery

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Thesis Abstract

There were various Buddhist activities that occurred in Hong Kong ever since the early 1990's that seem to high-light the growing prominence of Buddhism as a religion in Hong Kong. On December 29th, 1993, the Po Lin Monastery inaugurated their Tian Tan Buddha Statue. On July 1st 1997, after the change of sovereignty of Hong Kong from the British to the People's Republic of China, the birthday of Buddha (the 8th day of the 4th lunar month) became a statutory holiday in the Hong Kong SAR, replacing the Queen's birthday. On January 6th, 1998, the completion of the Chi Lin Nunnery Redevelopment project was marked by the grand opening of their monastic complex and the ceremony of lighting the Buddhist statues in the monastery (kai-guang 開光). On May 2004 the Central Government sent the Director of the Communist Party's United Front Work Department, Ms. Liu Yandong, to officiate the opening ceremony for a ten day exhibition of twenty Buddhists artifacts from Xian with Buddha's finger as centerpiece.

In 1995, HKU's May Cheng and Wong Siu-lun made a survey that showed a higher ratio of people declaring themselves as Buddhist as compared with a survey they made earlier in 1988: from 6.6% in 1988 to 11.6% in 1995. Cheng and Wong suggested that: "...the increased level of recruitment activity of the Buddhists in Hong Kong in recent years, including the erection of the world's largest Buddha statue in

1993, might have the greatest impact upon those who originally practiced traditional folk religion.” (Cheng and Wong 1997: 301) Cheng and Wong endorsed the concept that high visibility might have an effect on religious followers.

What Cheng and Wong seems to have not looked into is the influences of Taiwanese Buddhist organizations (TBO's) in Hong Kong. The majority of the informants for this thesis have had some influence from them. In Hong Kong, the more visible Buddhist institutions are the Hong Kong Buddhist Association 香港佛教聯會, Po Lin Monastery 寶蓮寺 and Chi Lin Nunnery 志蓮淨苑, even though they are highly visible, they simply could not match the three major TBO's impact in increasing interest in Buddhism in Hong Kong, particularly the younger Buddhists. Some Hong Kong followers, after being converted by the teachers from Taiwan, would continue to study Buddhism, but would not be actively involved with Buddhist organizations. They continue to read books from these three Masters. This thesis proposes that the TBO's in Hong Kong are the catalyst for the igniting the interest of Hong Kong believers in finding out more about the teachings of Buddhism that is relevant to a modern society. Some of these new Buddhists prefer to pursue their study of the religion independently, a manifestation of modernity, and Chi Lin Nunnery is able to address to these Buddhists' needs with their Cultural Center. The Nunnery has 1,000 students in their Cultural Center which conducts courses from all

the Northern, Southern and Tibetan transmissions of Buddhism. I interpret this as an attempt to 'ecumenize' Buddhism. What this thesis show is how the Chi Lin Nunnery position themselves in the modern society.

香港現代佛教—志蓮淨苑所扮演的角色

自 90 年代初，佛教活動在香港活躍起來，佛教亦越來越受重視：

1993 年 12 月 29 日，天壇大佛於寶蓮寺進行開光儀式。

1997 年 7 月 1 日，香港特別行政區回歸中華人民共和國統治，並設定每年佛誕日(農曆四月初八)為法定假期，取代了原先的英女皇壽辰。

1998 年 1 月 6 日，志蓮淨苑重建計劃順利完成，當時亦由眾多寺廟合辦了莊嚴隆重的佛像開光儀式。

2004 年 5 月，香港舉辦了一連十天的慶祝佛誕活動—「慶祝佛誕—香港佛教暨各界迎請佛指舍利瞻禮祈福大會」。當時全國政協副主席中央統戰部劉延東部長及數名知名人士擔任主禮嘉賓，盛況空前。逐漸奠定佛教在香港的地位。

香港大學 May Cheng 及 Wong Siu-lun 於 1995 年的研究調查中顯示：「香港人宣稱自己是佛教徒的人數比例大幅上升，由 1988 年的 6.6% 升至 1995 年的 11.6% ... 這是由於近年來香港的佛教活動明顯增加，包括在 1993 年在香港興建全球最大的佛像，這對於一些民間信仰有巨大影響。」(1997:301)

但作者似乎忽略了台灣佛教組織(TBO'S)在香港的影響力。事實上，這篇論文大

部分意見參與者，或多或少也受到 TBO'S 的影響。

在香港，最為人熟悉的佛教組織就是「香港佛教聯會」、「寶蓮寺」及「志蓮淨苑」。雖然它們廣為人知，但仍不及台灣佛教組織對香港人(尤其是年輕信徒)的影響力大。某些香港信眾在受到台灣佛教的轉化後，雖然會繼續研究佛學，但對於佛教組織、活動則不會積極參與。

這類新派佛教徒有一套新的理論來適應現今社會，他們會選擇繼續以獨立的模式奉行自己的宗教，而「志蓮淨苑文化中心」所扮演的就是他們的佛學研究中心之一。「志蓮淨苑」有 1000 名學生，分別負責北傳、南傳及藏傳的佛學。而這篇論文就是希望說明「志蓮淨苑」在現今社會扮演的角色，及解釋台灣佛教組織在香港的影響性。

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Symbols:

In the few years before the 1997 handover of the sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to the People's Republic of China (PRC), prominent religious symbols of Buddhism began to mingle with local Hong Kong politics. During this transition period, high profile religious rites were practiced in an environment charged with economic and political competition. Here are four examples.

On December 29th, 1993, the Po Lin Monastery inaugurated their Tian Tan (Tì Tàahn 天壇) Buddha Statue with a half-day ceremony from 7 a.m. to lunchtime. The inauguration ceremony was performed by twelve prominent monks from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and the US. The guests of honor included the president of the Buddhist Association of China, the Governor of Hong Kong, and the Director of the Xinhua News Agency (Hong Kong Branch), the highest ranking PRC official in Hong Kong. The statue was cast by the China Astronautics Science and Technology Consultant Corporation. The ceremony took place when Britain and China were in the middle of a political dispute concerning the

democratization of Hong Kong's Legislative Council, and there was a diplomatic incident when the Director of the Xinhua News Agency, Zhou Nan, snubbed the then Governor Chris Patten by not shaking the outreached hand of the Governor, but responding with a Buddhist greeting of 'hahp sahp' 合十. When questioned by the press on the incident, Chris Patten answered: "I didn't know Mr. Zhou is a Buddhist."

On July 1st 1997, after the change of sovereignty of Hong Kong from the British to the People's Republic of China, the birthday of Buddha (the 8th day of the 4th lunar month) became a statutory holiday in the Hong Kong SAR, replacing the Queen's birthday. While it is a welcome holiday, it does not seem that there are any general special public rituals for the holiday, but the holiday has raised Buddhism's profile in Hong Kong.

On January 6th, 1998, the completion of the Chi Lin Nunnery Redevelopment project was marked by the grand opening of their monastic complex and the ceremony of lighting the Buddhist statues in the monastery ['hòì gwòng' 開光] (*kāi-guāng*). The Chi Lin Nunnery (referred to as Chi Lin from now on) had risen from a relatively obscure nunnery on Diamond Hill to a high profile Buddhist institution, thanks to a highly successful fund raising campaign chaired by a celebrity host and actor, Eric Tsang, complete with a television show. The design of the redeveloped Monastery Complex was based on the Tang Dynasty's architecture, which the Nunnery declared, was the time

when Buddhism was at its height in China. Since then, the Nunnery has undertaken the task of building the Hammer Hill Road Public Garden for the Hong Kong Government, much of the final cost of which would be at Chi Lin Nunnery's own expense. The Park is at the front of Chi Lin Nunnery and is connected by a wide footbridge. It is of a design that compliments Chi Lin's Monastery Complex. It is a known fact that the park project was conceived at the same time as the redevelopment of the monastery complex.

In May 2004, Hong Kong suffered a severe crisis of confidence in the PRC Central Government: After the half-a-million participants march in July 1st 2003 against the anti-subversion law, the Central Government decided to interpret the Basic Law on the issue of the 2007 election of the Chief Executive of the SAR, basically vetoing the proposal from the democratic legislative councilors for direct election before it could even be submitted. In addition, the Central Government officials engaged in a dispute with local politicians on electoral reform and ultimately ruled out universal suffrage in the election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive in 2007: The abrupt departure from their radio programs of three well known talk show hosts critical of the SAR government and the Central Government officials and the political ostracism of prominent members of Democratic Party by the Central Government's officials further contributed to the social anxiety of the Hong Kong SAR. In an effort to express the Central Government's concern

for the Hong Kong people, the Central Government sent the Director of the Communist Party's United Front Work Department 統戰部, Ms. Liu Yandong 劉延東, to officiate the opening ceremony on 26th May, 2004, for a ten day exhibition of twenty Buddhist artifacts from Xian. The exhibition showed the Buddha's finger bone as centerpiece. While these Buddhist relics are classified as national treasures, to Buddhists, they believe the relics' presence was supposed to bring blessings to the SAR. For an atheist Central Government, this appeared to be an unprecedented good will gesture.

Many celebrities and prominent citizens in Hong Kong, including pop stars such as Alan Tam (who donated a million Hong Kong dollars to build the Tian Tan (Tin Tàahn) Buddha and recorded the School Song of Chi Lin Nunnery's schools) and Eric Tsang (who chaired the Fund Raising Committee of Chi Lin Nunnery's redevelopment); author and socialite Eunice Lam Yin Nei (who was interviewed in a Buddhist magazine declaring her faith in Buddhism); CEO and founder of Phoenix Television Liu Changle (who chaired the organizing committee of Ven. Xingyun's visit to Hong Kong); The President of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Prof. Poon Chung-Kwong (who gives public talks and publishes books teaching Buddhism), all publicly revealed their Buddhist beliefs.

May Cheng and Wong Siu-lun's 1995 survey showed an increased proportion of the

population declaring themselves as Buddhist compared with a 1988 survey (from 6.6% in 1988 to 11.6% in 1995). Buddhism's rise coincided with a decreased number of people declaring themselves as followers of folk religion in 1995. Cheng and Wong suggested that high visibility might have an effect on religious followers: "...the increased level of recruitment activity of the Buddhists in Hong Kong in recent years, including the erection of the world's largest Buddha statue in 1993, might have the greatest impact upon those who originally practiced traditional folk religion" (Cheng and Wong 1997: 301).

The four earlier events described above are cases that highlight the growing prominence of Buddhism as a religion in Hong Kong and how the central government took opportunities to express their political statements of good intent towards the Hong Kong Buddhists. However, Buddhists were not the favorites of the colonial authorities of Hong Kong in an earlier period.

When Hong Kong was a British Crown Colony, Anglican Protestantism was the "*de jure*" national religion. This formal relationship between government and the Anglican Church was evident from the Protocol List, in which the Anglican bishop ranked fifth following the Governor, Chief Justice, Chief Secretary and Commander-General" (Leung and Chan 2003: 20). They further illustrated this by noting that in 1950, Bishop Ronald Hall of the Anglican Church wrote to the then Secretary of Education that in order to

“counteract the influence of atheistic Communism, the Education Department should rely on Protestant churches and the Catholic Church to run schools” (Ibid: 26).

In addition to education, both Catholic and Protestant churches were very much involved with social services in Hong Kong as well. Churches’ involvement in local education continued after Hong Kong changed sovereignty to the PRC. On the other hand, perhaps in order to illustrate that the Christian schools did not exert any pressure to convert their students, Leung and Chan (the former is a Catholic nun and the latter a Protestant) note that “Throughout the 1990’s 91.6% of the students attending Catholic schools were non-Catholic” (Ibid: 32). Indeed, Leo Goodstadt, who wrote the forward of Leung and Chan’s book, said that “the Churches’ involvement was essentially a humanitarian response rather than part of strategy to proselytize.” He further suggested that Catholic schools did not give priority to the admission of Catholic children.

This perspective is probably idealistic but is at odds with the reports of my informants. More than one informant described how as young school children they were very receptive to the Catholic religious teaching because, if they expressed an interest, they were treated differently from other non-Catholic children, usually meaning more privileges. One of my informants had to go through pre-school Catholic training so that she could be admitted to an elite Catholic school. Her academic ability was very much

recognized by the teachers and the nuns at school, and she was very attracted to the religion to the point that she wanted to be a nun. But once she was out of the environment, she outgrew that idea and is now a Buddhist. Another informant is of the opinion that he was actually 'positioned' to be baptized by his father, who himself was not a Catholic, so that the son could enter an elite Catholic school. In fact the son later became an altar boy.

Thus church schools do not always have a neutral effect on their student's religious inclinations: the perceived special treatment on Catholic students was considered by non-Catholic school children as a symbol of elitism and was something to aspire to. This tends to encourage young school children to galvanize towards Catholicism particularly when teachers are ordained religious people and when a child's independent thinking has not yet developed. In addition, the compulsory Bible Knowledge and Christian rituals education mould these children's ideas of what a religion should be like. Many of my informants retain this idea even after reaching adulthood.

Former students of church schools are strongly over-represented in Hong Kong's government institutions. "In 1999, some 75 percent of the HKSAR's leading officials were graduates of Christian schools including Catholic schools" (Leung and Chan 2003: 32). This compares with 50.7% of Hong Kong's secondary schools currently run by Catholic or Protestant institution. On the other hand, Cheng and Wong's figures indicated

that in 1995, only 12.9% of the general population declared themselves as Protestant or Catholics. With such a high percentage of leading government officials having Christian schooling while the overwhelming majority of the populations are not Christians; this could be cited as an example of British Colonial legacy. The objective of containing the spread of Communism proposed by Bishop Hall of the Anglican Church in the 50's might be thus called a resounding success. On the other hand, since the majority of the refugees that came to Hong Kong during the 50's and 60's were in flight from the Communist regime, one could say that the Hong Kong Colonial Government was preaching to the converted.

The Christian teachings have a profound effect on the population of Hong Kong. Leung and Chan suggested that it was a case of 'institutional channeling' which is a government's application of policies to guide social organizations. In this case the policy of the Colonial Government 'contracting' Christian churches to run educational institutions has the effect of 'institutional religion channeling' (Ibid.:18-21) with the results mentioned earlier. Indeed, fourteen of my informants reported that even though there were no Christians in their family, they became involved with Christianity from the time when they attended Christian Primary Schools. Some became their family's first Christians (seven were baptized), some just by attending churches and feeling the urge to

be baptized. Later, after they become older, some as early as in their teens, they started to develop their own independent thinking. They ultimately dropped the Christian faith and took up Buddhism. The reasons for the change are different, as each has different individual experiences.

Currently, Hong Kong school children who attend Christian school are still subject to mandatory religious education. These institutions teach Christian doctrines to schoolchildren with the intention of cultivating a Christian person. In this environment, there is situational pressure for schoolchildren to learn Christian rituals. At the same time, in the family environment, children are heavily influenced by the modes of worship of family members they identify with. These were internalized and when situations in life cause them to seek spiritual consolation, the person's choice of religion would then depend on what the immediate situation is. Of my 40 informants, six were baptized as Christians when young (four from families that practiced folk religion, two from atheist families), but sought spiritual comfort by going through the take refuge ritual in Buddhism at a mature age.

To 'take refuge' is for the newly converted to declare the following: "I go to the Buddha for refuge or guidance, I go to the Dharma [doctrine] for refuge or guidance, I go to the sangha for refuge or guidance". Buddha, Dharma and sangha are the three treasures,

or triratna, of Buddhism, and Buddhist are to follow these three treasures. The “take refuge ceremony” is conducted by a monk on a new convert. The monk then becomes the refuge master of the converted Buddhist. It is common practice amongst my informants to take refuge more than once; therefore, a Buddhist can have more than one refuge master. There are a few of my informants who do not think that to have more than one refuge master is unusual. On the other hand, for many of my informants who were converted to Catholicism and were baptized, they project the meaning and significance of baptism on to the take refuge ceremony, and as a result, they attach more importance to the take refuge ceremony. For example, Abby, who was baptized as a Catholic as a child; now confesses to follow Buddhism. She offers flowers and fruits to a Buddha picture in her home, but she could not bring herself to perform the take refuge ceremony as she feels that “It’s like getting married again.”

Abby is not alone. Some other informants, who in their youth wanted to be Catholic, are now converted to Buddhism. Wendy, a volunteer in Chi Lin Nunnery said, “I was prejudiced against Buddhism [when I was young], because I studied in English schools. In my mind Buddhism was monks chanting prayers. ... I thought the sound of chants were out of date, not modern. When I attended Mass, it was clean in the church. ..., but Buddhism has caught up now: you noticed that they don’t burn incense [here in Chi Lin].

Also the places are cleaner, as compared with those rituals in the past, it's different." The Chi Lin Nunnery's image of a "modernized" Buddhist icon attracted many followers who were trained and have accepted the concept of what a "modern religion" should be from their Christian schoolings. We shall study further on the reason of their conversion.

Thesis Objectives

The Central government used Buddhism as a vehicle to demonstrate care for the people of Hong Kong: it allowed a prestigious government enterprise (the China Astronautics Science and Technology Consultant Corporation) to cast the Big Buddha for the Po Lin Monastery. (In fact, the Corporation has declared that the making of casts for non-Chinese government projects will not be repeated). As published in the various souvenir pamphlets commemorating the different stages of the Chi Lin redevelopment projects, experts from Beijing were involved in the projects as the nunnery's advisors, in addition to the skilled wooden-structures' workers from Shanxi. It is therefore not a coincidence that the Director of the Communist Party's United Front Work Department 統戰部, Ms. Liu Yandong 劉延東, came to Hong Kong, mentioned earlier, to officiate the opening ceremony of the ten-day exhibition of Buddha's finger and other Buddhist artifacts.

The Central government utilizes Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong to cultivate nationalism, or perhaps a Chinese cultural identity that relates to nationalism. It is not that the Central government has singled out Buddhists as the only target of their propaganda; Beijing has also given preferential treatment to Hong Kong as a whole, such as sending the PRC's first three astronauts to Hong Kong at the earliest opportunity: The first Chinese astronaut, Yang Liwei 楊利偉, visited Hong Kong in 31st October 2003, less than three weeks after China's first successful manned space flight launched on 15th October 2003. The other two Chinese astronauts Fei Junlong 費俊龍 and Nie Haishe 聶海勝 visited Hong Kong in 27th November 2005, less than two months after the second successful manned space flight launched on 12th October 2005. Beijing also sent the most up-to-date battleships to Hong Kong on the May 1st 2004. In the period around the seventh anniversary of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, the People's Liberation Army Performance Troupe came to Hong Kong. In fact, it appears that the Central Government is anxious to show the best and the finest to the population of Hong Kong in order to promote nationalism in the Hong Kong SAR.

Throughout my field research, the nuns of Chi Lin Nunnery were very vocal in their patriotism; they pronounced their love of China on more than one occasion, in the presence of many of their followers. In fact, it was repeatedly stated in the Chi Lin

Nunnery's souvenir pamphlets of various ceremonies that they want to uphold Chinese culture: On September 28th 1996, in the Column Erection Ceremony of the temple's construction (which was a religious ceremony blessing the event), the then Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Chi Lin Nunnery, Ms. Sally Aw, said in the vote of thanks published in the pamphlet of that ceremony: "The construction of Chi Lin has long term responsibilities. I hope everyone will continue this effort, so that hand in hand together we can create this enterprise glorifying Buddhism and Chinese Culture." (志蓮的工程建設, 任重道遠, 希望大家繼續努力, 和我們攜手共創這個光紹佛教和中華文化的大業.) On August 14th 1997, the Program for the Roof Topping Ceremony of the new Main Hall of Chi Lin stated that, "... the Chi Lin Nunnery will carry on its goals of services to the community, and the propagation of Chinese and Buddhist culture." This type of nationalistic sentiment was rather new for Hong Kong, and was no doubt influenced by the proximity of July 1st, 1997.

The speech of Sally Aw quoted above is just one formal declaration; the presentation made by the Nunnery's representatives to the Legislative Council to be the contractor for the construction of the Hammer Hill Road Public Garden is another. In this case, it is difficult to distinguish whether in fact the patriotism they expressed is genuine or primarily because it is a political statement that would enable them to reach the ultimate

target of constructing a surrounding that befits the monastery's aesthetic design, or both. One cannot expect the Nunnery to highlight the fact that they are interested in spreading the teachings of Buddha when the councilors of the Finance Committee, who award the contract, expressed just as vocally that they will not allow a Buddhist theme garden be constructed. The irony is that the Central Government, being Communist and atheist, has publicized their intent to spread Buddha's blessing to the SAR by exhibiting the Buddha's finger here; on the other hand, the Nunnery, as a Buddhist institution that preaches that the path to enlightenment is to discipline oneself, has found it necessary to pronounce their love of the motherland by promoting Chinese culture through their buildings' design and construction of public gardens.

The construction of a wooden complex that claims to be inspired by Tang Dynasty designs was basically initiated by Chi Lin Nunnery's Board and a handful of nuns based on their personal preferences. This wooden complex now provides admirers with an invented cultural heritage in addition to religious inspiration. On the other hand, it is clear that the construction of the complex cannot be done without cooperation from China. How much was the believers' choice inspired by the desire to be associated with the obvious political power from the North? Chi Lin is also involved with social services, education and public culture. This study will show how and what this new Buddhist icon

of Hong Kong, the Chi Lin Nunnery, has been doing in spreading the teaching of Buddha while negotiating Hong Kong's political minefield.

Literature Review

In this study I utilize the symbol recently constructed by Chi Lin Nunnery, an indigenous institution, as focal point and study the role played by this Buddhist institution in shaping the religious lives and perceptions of Hong Kong Buddhism. There are many other active Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong, many of them affiliated with institutions outside of Hong Kong. This non-indigenous affiliation should not be looked upon as anything new in Hong Kong. Throughout history, religious transmission had been associated with traders traveling to other parts of the world, followed by religious people from the traders' home country spreading their beliefs in to new lands. This thesis is neither a theological nor a historical analysis of Buddhism in Hong Kong. It is an anthropological study of modern Buddhism in Hong Kong, yet, I found that I have to borrow materials from these other disciplines in order to understand the background of my informants. The literature on the subject can be categorized from various angles: that of history, current situation in Hong Kong, believers' state-of-mind, and matters of concern to the nuns:

History

History of the world has many examples of religious missionaries following enterprising traders to different societies. It is not just in the Western colonial history that we see the transmission of religions via trade routes. While Ch'en provided a history of Buddhist transmission in to China through the history (Ch'en 1964), Foltz focused on the transmission of Buddhism and other religions via the Silk Road (Foltz 1999). These studies demonstrated the role of the traders in the past in the transmission of Buddhism to China. A similar case in mind is the opening up of the mainland China in 1979 for the "Four Modernizations" led by Deng Xiaoping. This opening of China generated substantial trade between the Chinese Mainland and the rest of the world. Business people from Taiwan, because of the political situation, were given attractive propagandistic preferential investment terms.

On the other hand, also because of the political situation, there was no direct communication between Taiwan and the Chinese Mainland. As a result, Hong Kong exercised its role of an entrepot/intermediary and benefited substantially from the arrangement. The resulting increase of people movements between Taiwan and Chinese Mainland via Hong Kong repeated the outcome of the past: As in the study by Foltz, in ancient times, because the Silk Road was efficiently utilized by traders, the Buddhist

monks were able to travel from India to China. In the 1980's, Taiwanese traders also open a route for their Buddhist monks, and we witnessed the eminent Taiwanese Buddhist monk, Ven. Xingyun, actively took the route available for him to reach Hong Kong¹.

In fact, if we consider the major overseas temple established by Ven. Xingyun, we can see that his major temples are where Taiwanese went. The only major temple in an underdeveloped country is the one in South Africa, and this is the last major country that had diplomatic ties with Taiwan as Republic of China. The Taiwanese thus performed a similar function as the travelers of the Silk Road in ancient days in the transmission of Buddhism. We also see the teachings of other prominent Buddhist leaders from Taiwan that came to Hong Kong through followers who brought their books from Taiwan to Hong Kong. We will be able to see how this was done later in this thesis.

De Bary studied how Buddhism influenced and was acculturated by the Chinese (De Bary 1969). Many of my informants recognize Buddhism originated from India, and that Buddhism is not originally a Chinese religion. In fact, those who think that Buddhism is a Chinese religion are those whose perception of Buddhism is the acculturated Buddhism, which some call the Chinese or Han Transmission. Ven. Shengyan also published a paper

¹ There is no report of Ven. Xingyun revisiting China. However, it was reported that he did reunite with his mother in Tokyo on 1981 after 40 years of not seeing her. Since Ven. Xingyun was born in the Chinese Mainland, and he went to Taiwan with the Nationalist Army in 1949, one can presume that his reunion with his mother is similar to many of the old Nationalist soldiers who were separated from their families in the Chinese Mainland during the Chinese Civil War and reunion was only made possible by the reopening of China to the world.

on the history of Buddhist Transmission in to China and referred the Han Transmission as an acculturated Chinese Buddhism (Shengyan 2003).

Kao Wing-siu (Kao 2002) provided information on how Buddhist monks migrated to Hong Kong after the Communists came to power in the mainland, much like Jones' work on Taiwan after 1949 (Jones 1999), though Kao's work is lesser in scale. Hong Kong Buddhists never had the opportunity to have as much political experience as monks in those Asian countries whose populations were involved in political uprisings studied by Ian Harris (Harris 1999) because many of the monks were themselves migrants to Hong Kong. There are not many publications on the more recent history of Buddhism in Hong Kong, except for what Ven. Sik Hinhung provided during a seminar on oral history of religion in Hong Kong (Sik and Leung 2003). He revealed that while there are increases in people taking tonsure in recent years, most of these people are of non-Hong Kong origin and that there are more women taking the tonsure than men.

Current Situation in Hong Kong

Holmes Welch provided a description of Buddhist institutions' practices in China before the establishment of the PRC (Welch 1967). From this study of Hong Kong Buddhists, I learned that the situation in Hong Kong is very dissimilar from the situation described by Welch. In fact, Birnbaum's description of the current state of monasteries in

China in which he cited that there is a gap between the elder monks and the younger ones (Birnbaum 2003), is in many ways, quite similar to the case here in Hong Kong. The added boundary is the difference of dialect between the Mandarin speaking Northern monks who are the current Hong Kong Buddhist leaders and the Cantonese speaking local monks. The gap between the local-born sangha and the mainland-born sangha was described by John Shannon (Shannon 2003). Many well known local born younger monks took their tonsures after they reached adulthood. In other words, they bring in some very liberal behaviors and are full of self-confidence. This is probably an effect of not many having had the experience of growing up in a monastery to mold their behavior.

To illustrate, I was in a talk in which the guest of honor, a prominent local monk, was also a retired civil servant who studied overseas before he took the tonsure. He was very excited when he met some of his past colleagues. He went on to hug his previous boss, a lady, and, in a jovial mood, sat down to drink white wine with us, breaking at least one of the five precepts of ordinary lay Buddhist: The one which prohibits alcohol consumption. The beauty of the incidence is that no one in the room thought that he was doing anything unacceptable. In fact some Buddhists offered him respects in the form of a red packet, *lai see*, and I was prompted by an elder lady to do the same. Another example of modern behavior of sangha involves one of my informant nuns. When I called

on her unannounced after some of my night classes, she was usually still busily at work in her office well into the night, just like any office workers in businesses in Central District, all the while telling me that she should be engaged in doing the ‘home work’ of meditating and studying of the sutra as nuns are suppose to be doing at that time of day.

Another impact of modernism affecting Buddhist institutions is the modern legal system. Buddhist monasteries in Hong Kong, as non-profit organizations, are subject to control by modern accounting laws. They are registered as a limited company and their annual reports are open to the public. There is no flexibility in cross subsidizing their different trust Funds if the trusts were set up for particular purposes designated by the donor. In addition, anyone, if they pay a small fee to the Hong Kong Government Company Registry, can have access to the Chi Lin Nunnery’s annual accounting report. The modern temples are therefore quite transparent financially and are subject to instantaneous public scrutiny as well as public opinion. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why the Nunnery is very concerned with their public image. Their souvenir shop does not ‘sell’ produce; the buyer just put the money in the donation box when they pick up the goods because the nunnery is not suppose to be profit oriented.

Believers’ state-of-mind

Hong Kong’s collective memories of a past era, including traditional religious

practices, was put in a secondary position in favor of Western traditions under colonial rule when the elites with Western characteristics dominated the society. Although Hongkongers did not experience the physical sufferings of the Kong's of Dachuan such as forced labor or imprisonment (Jing 1996), socially, the majority of Hong Kong's population was migrants or descendants of migrants who were cut off from their ancestral space and memories. Chinese literature, the mastery of which was important for social advancement in China, was replaced by the mastery of English literature. Even though the 70's and 80's economic boom propelled a more confident Hongkonger identity, the change of sovereignty without any political input from the majority, the stagnant Hong Kong economy that compares with the one across the Shenzhen river which has continue to surge forward since the new millennium, and the fact that sovereignty changes have not improved the autonomy of Hong Kong people, such that they are still under the mercy of the international economy and a ruling group from outside of the region, all undermine the collective self confidence of society.

C. K. Yang distinguished two categories of Chinese religion; institutional (e.g. Buddhism) and diffused (e.g. folk religions) (Yang 1961). But application of Yang's classification would need to be reinterpreted if we consider some of the actual practices of my informants and Overmyer's study of folk Buddhism in the political environments

of China's past history. While many of my informants call themselves a Buddhist, or think of themselves as Buddhists, their actual practices are more akin to folk religion practitioners. Indeed, according to Overmyer, historically, folk Buddhist sects prevailed with syncretic modes of worship, all along calling themselves nian-fo 念佛 societies, teaching about Amitabha's paradise (Overmyer 1976). Overmyer referred to these organizations as sects. These sects are led and supported by ordinary people. Some of these sects are still active in Taiwan; they picked up ideas from Daoism and popular religion in addition to Buddhism, and have their own books of scriptures (Overmyer 1986: 53-4).

For some people who were educated in Christian schools during the colonial period of unchallenged British power, Christianity in Hong Kong would be their institutional religions, while all the rest, including some Buddhism, were diffused religions. Other than the interpretation of other non-Christian religions that they learned from Christian schools, what many of the informants' knowledge of Chinese religions are based on what they remember when they observed family members practicing folk religion. As a result, after 'conversion' to Buddhism, they would pray to Daoist deities at the same time declaring themselves as Buddhist. The truth of the matter is the new converts do not have a continuous religious memory.

Hervieu-Léger is correct when she said that, “However wary one may be of making a rigid distinction between societies of memory and societies of change, it is perfectly reasonable to point out how the evidence of social, cultural and psychological continuity is eroded through the effect of change. Change, which is a function of modernity itself, has resulted in modern societies being less and less able to nurture the innate capacity of individuals and groups to assimilate or imaginatively to project a lineage of belief.” (Hervieu-Léger 2001: 123), as a result, she contends the religious memory chain is fragmentized. While Hervieu-Léger was discussing Christianity in Europe, the same principal can be applied to Buddhism in Hong Kong.

A few of my informants can be called casual folk Buddhists by, for example, adopting worship rites that include folk religion practices, yet, identify themselves as Buddhists. I suggest that the reason for that happening is that most informants were not certain of the ‘proper way to worship’ according to Buddhist rituals, as they are unable to distinguish which Chinese worshipping rituals is of Taoist or of Buddhist origin. I was in a ‘pilgrimage’ tour with a group of Hong Kong people, some calling themselves Buddhists. We were at a temple in Zhejiang Province 浙江省 which legend said that Guan Yin 觀音 jumped from a spot there to Japan. At the temple, many in my group asked the tourist guide how to worship the gods, and the guide diplomatically told them

to 'follow karma' 隨緣, i.e., 'Do as you like'. It could be that the guide himself didn't know what the proper method of worship is, but with that statement, worshippers felt authorized to do as they pleased. In effect, 'correct' or 'incorrect' rites seems not important to Buddhists; all they are looking for is peace of mind that they did paid homage.

One of the business world's strategies for survival in Hong Kong is to maintain flexibility; the concept of organizational re-engineering and re-structuring is accepted by Hong Kong society in general. The government compliments this thinking by promoting re-training so that mid-career Hongkongers laid off by businesses can adapt, and it seems that this is also projected to the beliefs of Hongkongers. This study will demonstrate how the mentality of flexibility to accept changes prevails in religious beliefs. From Leung and Chan's book (Leung and Chan 2003); we saw how politics of the past imposed Christian religion training on Hong Kong school children. What they brought out also provides a very interesting insight to the background of how and why the political development of Hong Kong since 1997 would shift the balance of cooperation of the government with different religious institutions.

Matters of concern to the nuns

The Chi Lin Nunnery itself, with its high profile projects, plays an important role in

increasing the visibility of Buddhism. But as a nunnery, it also raised the profile of women's role in promoting Buddhism. The issue of gender and Chinese religion was discussed by Kwok Pui-Lan (Kwok 1995). Kwok mentioned that as early as in the 1930's, women's image in the Buddhist sutra was very complex: sometimes praised, sometimes denigrated. Crane (Crane: 2004), on the other hand, gave a synopsis of the reasons for women in Taiwan who became Buddhist nuns as quite different from the historical Qing-era nuns who she stated, mostly "came from poverty and chose nunhood out of desperation." (Crane 2004: 270). To Crane, the modern day Buddhist nuns in Taiwan chose nunhood as an escape from the society's expectation of them getting married.

On the other hand, nunhood does not allow a woman to escape from the male dominance. One of the over thirty symbols in a person's body that indicate the person has reached Buddhahood includes a 'well retracted male organ' (Lim 2001: 118-121), this thus totally excludes a person with a female body. Some Buddhist scholar thinks that women can discipline themselves in to a male body, and therefore can reach nirvana in this life, and some think that women are just too polluted to have a chance to reach nirvana. From my observation of Chi Lin, I noticed that there are many services in which monks from China are invited to perform religious rites. In fact most of the major services I observed, such as the earth breaking ceremony of the new Hammer Hill Garden

that Chi Lin is building for the government, and the New Year's celebration service, were all performed by monks invited from China.

Buddhist nuns still suffer discrimination even in the 21st Century. According to my nun informant, Rev. Z, they have to observe over 300 precepts while their male counterparts only have to observe over 200 precepts. The fact that there are gender equality and modern corporate laws in the 21st Century Hong Kong, allows the nuns of Chi Lin to enjoy less domination from their male counterpart. The Buddhist Dharma that requires an experienced nun to be respectful (and may I add, thus obedient) to a novice monk can be shielded off when the experienced nun has to work according to the regulations of a modern society and need to be answerable to modern laws.

Research Methods

The research was based on in-depth interviews and participant-observation at the Chi Lin Nunnery and another Buddhist hall which I will refer to as Dong Mi Buddhist Hall. Formal interviews were conducted with 40 self declared Buddhists and 'Buddhists sympathizers' from a list of prepared questions. They are each given a pseudonym in this thesis. By 'Buddhists sympathizers', I am referring to people who have reservations admitting that they are Buddhists for different reasons, but on the other hand would

volunteer to provide services or participate in activities of Buddhist institutions and speak favorably of the religion. These Buddhists sympathizers can be of two kinds: some seem to have association with some sangha, but others seem to be 'free floating', i.e., they are not tied to any specific Buddhist temple. In addition to these 40 lay informants, there is one nun, Rev. Z in Chi Lin that I had formal interview with (others were either too busy to let me interview them or do not want me to interview them) and talked with a few others Buddhists and nuns. I was able to see and talk with this informant nun in many occasions. In formal interviews, I recorded the interview and took notes during the interview after obtaining permission from the informant (no one turned me down on this). As for the other people and nuns I talked with, they are aware that I am a researcher but I took no notes in front of them, nor do I use a recorder. There were about four or five of these people including nuns.

Not all Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong have spectacular monasteries such as those of Po Lin Monastery and Chi Lin Nunnery. Some are just modern style buildings without traditional Chinese decorations. Many are established in apartment buildings, commercial or industrial buildings. My informants are from various different Buddhist halls, but there is another larger group which I interviewed, other than the group from Chi Lin Nunnery: Six of my informants are from a Buddhist hall that is a branch of the Dong

Mi Sect 東密宗 and is located in an industrial building in the Cheung Sha Wan 長沙灣 area. It is very low profile. It doesn't have a sign outside the building indicating a Buddhist hall is in the building. It is not on the registered list of temples provided to me by the Chinese Temple Committee.

My informants were not chosen at random, because I used a 'snow-ball' sampling technique; my sample group members are associated with one another. I classified them in different categories according to which Buddhist Institutions they are associated with in the "category" column of Appendix I. These informants included the attendees of classes I was enrolled in, and the other volunteers working in Chi Lin, where I myself volunteered during the summer of 2003. Some other informants were referred to by personal friends and associates. Perhaps because these are mostly people with the time and mind available to study Buddhism, the sample may have skewed towards the middle and upper middle class. I tried to find out what qualifies a person to participate in the works in the nunnery as a volunteer. I have participated and observed how the volunteer network operates. It is a very important element of Chi Lin's success, just as it is the volunteers' dedication that makes Ciji the success it is in Taiwan. I have also done participant observation in ceremonies and rituals held in both Chi Lin and the Dong Mi Buddhist Hall.

The age of my informants ranges from 23 to 62 at time of interview; 30 are female and 10 are male. Their education ranges from primary school to post graduate. Twenty-two of them are associated with Chi Lin Nunnery as volunteers, students, members, or participants of their services or talks, and six are members of the Dong Mi Buddhist Hall. The remaining 12 are Buddhist sympathizers or are affiliated with other temples. Their professions are various; there are retirees, housewives, law student, university professors, business executives, banker, lawyer, medical doctor, civil servants, office service worker, laid off office assistant, etc. Appendix I provide a summary of their profiles. From these informants I was able to learn not only their cultural tendency - whether they are more independent in their thinking, i.e. “modernized”; or if they tend to adhere to what their parents taught them, i.e. relate to the more “historical Chinese” culture². But also I was able to share their religious thinking. I was surprised with their candid replies and willingness to cooperate. They were very happy to answer my questions and explain to me, a Christian, some of the Buddhist terms they used when I did not understand. To them I am very grateful; I was able to learn from each and every one of them.

My general impression is that the younger Buddhists that I interviewed (the

² By “historical Chinese culture” I am referring to the memories or the value Chinese refugees brought with them from mainland China.

Buddhists in their 20's and 30's) are very interested in spreading the teaching of Buddhism. One in particular was interested in doing something similar to what the Christians are doing, such as handing out pamphlets and preaching in the streets. She was enthusiastic about raising money for events of their Buddhist Hall with some friends and her sister; she also had a plan for spreading the words of Buddha. She was an exception however. The majority of the others simply expressed the hope that the Hong Kong Buddhists halls might have some younger sangha. Many who are not associated with Chi Lin feel that the three major Buddhist leaders in Taiwan have inspired them and they seem to relate to the Taiwanese Buddhist leaders more than they relate to Hong Kong's Buddhist leaders, with the exception of Rev. Wan Fan of the Chi Lin Nunnery. They lament the fact that Hong Kong Buddhist institutions seem to be too conservative and do not reach out to the public as much as those in Taiwan.

As for the more mature informants, the eldest one can be said to be more typical of the image of the traditional Chinese Buddhist: Karen, 62 years old at time of interview, is involved with the weekly ritual of 'release life', (fong sàng 放生) so as to build merit for her next life. She is not interested in TV or movies. In the day time she goes to her Buddhist halls after she has finished with her housework. In the past, she would go to a few different Buddhist halls, (she calls it 'running halls' - jau tohng 走堂), but when I

interviewed her, she was limiting herself to two only.

Education and social class bear no relevance to the knowledge of the religion. On the other hand, there are some serious Buddhists who really do believe in the magical nature of religious services, including some of the informants from the Dong Mi Sect Buddhist Hall in Cheung Sha Wan. In fact, one can identify how much a person is influenced by Buddhism through their vocabulary. Because many of the Buddhist use terms of the sutras are translated to classical Chinese, (màhn yihn, 文言), use of these terms can indicate how much the informant has absorbed the Buddhist teachings.

Examples include;

- 'follow karma' (Chèuih Yùhn 隨緣), or any reference on karma (Yùhn 緣);
- 'talks' (Hòì Sih 開示), i.e., talks conducted by monks or nuns to teach Buddhism;
- 'cause and effect' (Yàn Gwó 因果), an expansion of belief in the making of karma;
- 'This life' (Gàm Sàng 今生), insinuating that there are past and future lives;
- 'repay' (Lòih Bou 來報), referring to why things happened the way they did;
- 'make [bad] karma' (Jouh Yihp 做業), referring to doing something that one should not do;

These terms would turn up now and then in conversation with the informants. There seems to be a positive correlation between the self-declared Buddhists' knowledge of the sutra and the usage of the language system. I can distinguish how knowledgeable in Buddhism an informant is by both the language they use and how they describe the religion. For example, Karen, my eldest informant, used to volunteer at Chi Lin, doing things such as carrying tiles during the Chi Lin Fund Raising event of 'one tile one wish' 一瓦一願, and volunteered to do general chores such as making beds and tidying visiting monks' places. Her conversation was peppered with Buddhist terminology.

Summary

With the colossal public symbols mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, what we will see is that many of the informants who identified themselves as Buddhists or Buddhist sympathizers, expressed a recognition of the significance of these symbols, though they read both positive and negative significances as well as religious and non-religious meanings. What does Buddhism offer and mean to people such as those self-declared Buddhists mentioned by Cheng and Wong? Why would a population overwhelmingly educated in Christian values be interested in Buddhism? These people are very diverse; they cover a spectrum of the population. The majority of them have a

family history of folk religion beliefs. Some identify Buddhism with Chinese culture, and it seems that they were seeking their cultural roots as well when they identified themselves as Buddhists.

Taiwan's Ven. Xingyun of Fo Guang Shan played an important role in igniting interests of Hong Kong people of Chinese descent in Buddhism (from here on I will refer to them as Hong Kong believers). Many of my informants were touched by his preaching, and followed up with reading Xingyun's books in Humanistic Buddhism. Similarly, Ven. Shengyan of the Dharma Drum Mountain and Ven. Zhengyan of the Ciji Gongdehui have had great influence on Buddhists in Hong Kong. The common written language facilitated their influence on the Hong Kong population. Their significance is real and is felt by Hong Kong Buddhist institutions. One of the nuns in Chi Lin Nunnery expressed indignation that in a television program on Hong Kong Buddhism, the Fo Xiang Buddhist Hall in Kowloon was presented. Her point was that Fo Xiang is basically a branch of the Fo Guang Shan organization from Taiwan, so they are not really a "Hong Kong" organization. I will cover the 'Taiwan influence' further in Chapter 2.

Chi Lin undertook some very impressive activities including the redevelopment of their nunnery and the education of the general public about Buddhism through their Education Institution. This continues in their current involvement with the Hammer Hill

Road Public Park. I will give a more detailed description of Chi Lin Nunnery's history and activities in Chapter 3. The Chi Lin Nunnery has mentioned publicly to their students and privately to me their intention to teach zhengxin to the general public. The concept of zhengxin was in fact formalized by Ven. Shengyan of Dharma Drum Mountain in his writing (Shengyan 1991). This has the effect of leading the Chi Lin followers away from the influence of folk religion. Chi Lin's objective is to help new converts to learn the correct Buddhist doctrines. They declared that they are not concerned if the teachers of their courses do not preach the Pureland School doctrine (to which Chi Lin belongs), as long as they teach "traditional doctrines". On the other hand, their magnificent wooden monastery, while it inspires interest in Buddhism, also as itself, presented a focal point for disagreement amongst Buddhists.

There is much diversity amongst my informants in their feelings towards the Chi Lin Nunnery. As one might expect, volunteers and Buddhists who are associated with Chi Lin do feel that the construction of the Tang Dynasty inspired monastery complex is a tremendous contribution to the spreading of Buddhism. Some others, however, commented that the money spent could have been put to better use. Some were more restrained than others in these kinds of comments. As expected, the lesser the association the informant has with Chi Lin Nunnery, the harsher the criticism. A student that was

taking a course in Chi Lin said in a restrained manner, “When I saw Chi Lin, it seems to be a waste; they have their karma to have people to contribute and can built it [the monastery] so grand. It could be that because it is so grand that people will have joy in their heart. It is also a way [to convert believers]. But in my heart, I have struggled; that wood is very expensive ... but they have their karma. Here [referring to her own temple] we don’t have the karma, there is nothing to say. You can see another manifestation of Buddha’s philosophy, karma is personal.” She was comparing the Chi Lin Nunnery with the small monastery where she serves as a volunteer. There are tensions even within Chi Lin itself. Another informant stopped her volunteer work at Chi Lin because she felt that there was too much gossip and jealousy amongst the volunteers. Now she believes that she should be ‘building merit’ 積善, so she spends all her spare time reciting prayers and reading sutra.

The impact of Christian schools’ religious teachings on Hong Kong people’s religiosity will be further reviewed in the chapter 4 of this thesis when we discuss our informants’ reasons to believe. How the informants’ come to identify themselves with Buddhism will be studied in the same chapter. Many of the informants of this thesis are involved with the financial, commercial and government sectors of Hong Kong. Many are high flyers in international firms. These are in fact people from a wide spectrum of

socioeconomic groups who identify with Buddhism. These persons exhibit diversities in their methods of worship and contributions to the religion. But the differences in their methods of worship seem not related to the socioeconomic levels. My eldest informant was once simply an illegal immigrant who walked over to Hong Kong in 1959 from her home village. She became a Buddhist when her son asked her to help Chi Lin during the nunnery's redevelopment. Listening to her talk during our interview, I could sense the wisdom of the lady despite the fact that she didn't have any formal education.

Quite a few of the informants have no qualms worshipping Wong Tai Sin and going to Man Mo Temple during Chinese New Year. Interestingly, this applies even to those informants from relatively privileged social strata: there is no correlation of *zhengxin* (i.e., the tendency of thinking rationally while seeking to follow Buddhism according to the Dharma), with the education or social level of the believer. In other words, some of them do not seem to have as much knowledge of their current religion when compared to their knowledge of their previous religion, e.g., Catholicism, which they acquired during their old school days.

For example, the wife of a director of one of Hong Kong's largest conglomerates, who is widely traveled, and who herself has worked for a multi-national company, is convinced that her late father called on her during a Water-Land Service. She considers

herself a Buddhist, even though she was baptized as a Catholic. As a Buddhist, she said,

Compared with Wong Tai Sin and Tin Hau, I think Buddhism is more orthodox. Only Hong Kong people worship Wong Tai Sin. Why? Because they say he performed some miracle. There is no Wong Tai Sin in Buddhism ... my interest [in Buddhism] started from Wong Tai Sin, because my sister gave me the gourd [a symbol of Chinese medicine with which Wong Tai Sin is associated]. Because my belief in Buddhism was initiated from Wong Tai Sin, so I also worship Wong Tai Sin. I don't worship Tin Hau. Based on my understanding, I think Tin Hau is one of the incarnations of Guan Yin.

Many informants I interviewed that only had primary school education, such as Karen, my eldest informant, can readily identify that Wong Tai Sin is Daoist and would not have any thing to do with him. Also most can tell that Tin Hau is a Daoist deity whereas Guan Yin is a Buddhism bodhisattva.

Many of the informants experienced gradual conversion to Buddhism whilst seeking personal answers. Nevertheless, theirs is a new form of Buddhism, different from the past. In the past, Buddhist institutions in China could be economically independent by owning land to collect rents, or receiving economic support from the government or local gentry. This is a privilege not enjoyed by most modern Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong. These local institutions do not have strong wealthy overseas higher organizations to assist

them such as the Roman Catholics or large Christian affiliations. Patrons can be hard to come by from a community that values monetary wealth. Most modern Buddhist institutions need to be secularized since the sangha cannot both be reclusive and expect the number of visitors (and donors) to their monasteries and temples to increase. Donation from visitors could also be unreliable, subject to the whims of a fickle public. Buddhism, as a religion that preaches self restraint, must negotiate carefully in a consumerist oriented globalized metropolis such as Hong Kong. The Po Lin Monastery's operation of vegetarian restaurants in their temples, as well as shops and stalls, would be what Gerth and Mills would classify using the Weberian term "economically relevant" activities (Gerth and Mill 1946: 47).

Hong Kong is perhaps unique in that we had a drastic sovereignty change done in peace. The situation in colonial Hong Kong was that the British Government was trying to diminish the threat of the powerful Communist neighbor's 'indoctrination' of Hong Kong's young people's minds by collaborating with the Christian missionaries in the colony's education. The exclusive nature of Christianity and its religious teachings meant that there could be no fusion of the East and the West in religion, as contrasted by Buddhism's ability to be infused with Daoism and Confucianism throughout its history in China. The result is that believers who became Christians had to reject other beliefs.

Historically, China accommodated a diversity of beliefs as long as those in power did not feel threatened by the beliefs, or better still, if the beliefs reinforced their right to rule. With the new sovereign in Hong Kong, even though there is no democracy, there are civil liberties. The removal of a single dominant religion, such as Christianity, gives more room for people with the propensity for spirituality to maneuver amongst different religions. I will attempt to document how individuals in the Hong Kong SAR rationalize their ever changing beliefs in a place where those in power do not enforce one particular religion or the other, and how one religious institution, the Chi Lin Nunnery, tries to preach their doctrine to the local population.

Chapter 2: The “Modernization” of Hong Kong Buddhism

As a society driven by economic rationality, religious beliefs in Hong Kong are considered to be trivial by the majority when compared with the more important issue of the economic activities of earning money. Living in an international city with a history of being under British rule, the population of Hong Kong is culturally very much attuned with the West and as an entrepot; the population is also geographically and socially mobile.

In the past, Buddhism as a religion was looked down upon by the elite in Hong Kong based on Western ‘rationality’. That is one reason why some informants are rather shy about talking about their belief in Buddhism. This is more true for men than for women. Of all the women informants I interviewed, all were openly talking about their beliefs and they reinforce their belief by joining activities in a Buddhist hall or temple. On the other hand, of the ten men I interviewed, three were vocal about their beliefs, but they do not actively participate in the religious activities of any Buddhist hall; one is active in helping a Buddhist hall, but would not admit his belief. All these four men are acknowledged by their friends as Buddhist (either in heart or in sympathy), which they do not categorically deny. I term these four people as practicing ‘independent religiosity’.

The shyness is probably based on the conflicting view point that one should have more faith in modern science than in an old and probably “anachronous” belief such as Buddhism. Alternatively, it could be due to the fact that they can not relate as much with a woman researcher to openly discuss their religion.

Modernized Buddhism closer to home

According to Scott Pacey (Pacey 2005), Ven. Xingyun, Ven. Shengyan and Ven. Zhengyan, the three prominent figures in Taiwanese Buddhism continued with the concept of “Renjian Fojiao” 人間佛教 introduced in the early 20th Century by Taixu 太虛 and then by Yinshun 印順, both of whom “were concerned with the progress of human society and with providing solutions to worldly problems through the Buddha Dharma” (Pacey 2005:64). The influence of the three Taiwanese Buddhist organizations (TBOs) leaders in Hong Kong is very strong. Together, they helped in eradicating the image of ‘mixin’ which was branded on Buddhism during the early 20th Century by Chinese intelligentsia as a stumbling block of the country’s progress to modernity. In the following section, we will look in more detail at what has been happening to Buddhism in Taiwan and how it has affected Hong Kong.

The majority of my informants have been influenced by the TBOs. The most visible

and modern Taiwan Buddhist organizations nowadays are: Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 founded by Ven. Xingyun 星雲法師; Ciji Gongdehui 慈濟功德會 founded by Ven. Zhengyan 證嚴法師 (see Huang and Weller 1998); and Dharma Drum Mountain [Fagu Shan Education Foundation 法鼓山文教基金會] founded by Ven. Shengyan 聖嚴法師. In Hong Kong, the more visible Buddhist institutions are the Hong Kong Buddhist Association 香港佛教聯會, Po Lin Monastery 寶蓮寺 and Chi Lin Nunnery 志蓮淨苑. Even though they are highly visible, the Hong Kong Buddhist institutions simply can not match the three major TBO's impact on the religiosity of Buddhists in Hong Kong, particularly the younger Buddhists. The founders of these three Taiwan institutions are still at the helm³; each of them is involved in the publication of books on Buddhism, books that are written in clear and simple words with wide readership. This is not the case with Hong Kong's local Buddhist institutions, which no longer have their founders at the helm. The three Taiwan Buddhist organizations are all run with unorthodox, innovative methods developed by the founders. Spreading out globally, all three have branches in Hong Kong.

³ Since the writing of this thesis, Ven. Shengyan has recently handed over the abbotship to one of his disciples, Ven. Guǒ Dōng, in September 2nd 2006.

Fo Guang Shan

Ven. Xingyun came to Hong Kong in 1983 and gave talks on Buddhism for three days in the Shatin City Hall. Since then he has established the Fo Xiang (Faht Heung 佛香) Buddhist Hall. Ven. Xingyun returns to Hong Kong annually. Many of the informants I interviewed for this study have attended his talks. Usually, there is a “take refuge” 皈依 ceremony on the final day of these talks. An informant I quoted earlier, Mabel, attended one of these talks when she was young. She recalled that she was very impressed by the entire three nights of talks. It was the first time that she had been introduced to the Greater Vehicle thinking. After the talks she was inspired to make a frantic search for the Fo Guang Shan’s local Buddhist Hall, which coincidentally was located near her school. Ven. Xingyun makes impact even on non-Buddhists: Ian declared that he is an atheist. Yet, he volunteered to serve in Ven. Xingyun’s talk and read the Venerable’s books. Herbert, the former Catholic altar boy who says that he is no longer a Catholic, also reads Ven. Xingyun’s books, saying that he will be a Buddhist when he retires, because he wants to do more in depth study but he does not have the time while he is working. Ven. Xingyun’s influence spread across the age groups. Twenty-three year old Zara thinks the Venerable is the greatest Buddhist on earth.

According to an informant who runs a popular Buddhist Magazine here in Hong Kong, Fo Guang Shan was the only one of the three major TBOs whose founder took the initiative to come to Hong Kong. The informant also said, even before Ven. Xingyun set up his branch here, he was in the then colony to investigate the feasibility of such a scheme. Ven. Xingyun must be the envy of the Foreign Office of the Republic of China. While the Taiwan authority has tried to obtain official recognition of the world without much success, according to their official web site, the Fo Guang Shan organization has over a hundred branches around the world, it prints Buddhist books, various periodicals, operates press houses, it runs 16 Buddhist Institutions, four Universities, and 26 libraries. They have one hundred and fifty branch temples, with the larger ones in Japan, Australia, South Africa, and North America, all countries that have Taiwan immigrants. In May 1992, Ven. Xingyun founded the Buddha's Light International Association in California, and according to their web site: "The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations [ECOSOC], at its Substantive Session of July 2003, decided to grant Special consultative status to the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA), a Non-Governmental Organization of the United States"⁴. The web site also claims Ven. Xingyun to have one

⁴ There is a comment that the diplomatic functions of Ven. Xingyun's international work are quite conscious, and actively encouraged by the ROC government. However, I am not in a position to comment on this point as it is beyond my knowledge.

million followers.

In Hong Kong, Ven. Xingyun has maintained his practice of conducting a take refuge ceremony on the last day of his annual three days talks. Many Hong Kong Buddhists have taken refuge in the ceremony conducted by Ven. Xingyun. Of the 40 Buddhists I have interviewed, 15 of them have either taken refuge under Ven. Xingyun or have attended to his talks either as a member of the audience or as a volunteer. Most of them are not affiliated with the Chi Lin Nunnery. Many of these Buddhists have followed up by reading books authored by Ven. Xingyun. There is no doubt that Ven. Xingyun has made a strong impact on the modernization of Buddhism in Hong Kong. Ven. Xingyun advocates Humanistic Buddhism. James Santucci mentioned in the forward of Ven. Xingyun's book on Humanistic Buddhism, "One of the early expressions of this more practical form of Buddhism in China was introduced by Venerable T'ai Hsu [Taixu] (1889 ~1947), the monastic who introduced the term 'Humanistic Buddhism,' a form of Buddhism that was designed to transform society and bring about human progress.... It is Buddhism minus the regional, doctrinal, ritual, and traditional limitations that so often equate Buddhism with a particular ethnic or cultural group" (Ven. Xingyun [Ven. Master Hsing Yun] 2003: *vi-vii*).

What Ven. Xingyun advocates is to follow the lead of Buddhism in Japan and Korea,

including: opening the temples to public, performing monastic work in society, putting patronage systems in place, founding universities, opening department stores, and establishing television stations. According to Ven. Xingyun, “If an individual or a group desires to be accepted, they must contribute politically or economically to society. By the same token, Buddhism will have value only to the extent to which it can conform to the times, providing people with joy and happiness. Otherwise it will die out.” (ibid: ix). When compared with the past impression that Buddhism is only for funerals and the dead, which attracted mainly those people closer to that stage in life, Ven. Xingyun brings a new perception of Buddhism that makes the religion more relevant to modern society. This helps to attract a younger generation of Buddhists in Hong Kong and is instrumental in modernizing Buddhism here.

Dharma Drum Mountain [Fagu Shan Education Foundation]

According to Jones, Ven. Shengyan advocates formal Buddhist education in Taiwan. Ven. Shengyan’s organization is now running a university, a high school, an international Chan (Zen) meditation center, together with a publishing and translation bureau under the Dharmapala Organization of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan (Jones 1999). The informant who runs a popular Buddhist magazine further told me that Ven. Shengyan had

not originally planned to start a Buddhist Hall in Hong Kong. Dharma Drum was founded in Taiwan in 1985, the organization's objective being to spread Buddhism through education and the teaching of Ven. Shengyan who advocated the teaching of zhengxin Buddhism. The Hong Kong branch of Dharma Drum Mountain started when some of the followers of Ven. Shengyan went to Taiwan and decided to bring back some of his books. At first, these were informally stored in a corner of someone's office. Later, as the collection grew, a small office in Wanchai was used. Four years ago a Dharma Drum's branch was set up and it moved to its present location in Lai Chi Kok. The small office in Wanchai later became the office of the Buddhist magazine my informant works for. The greatest influence Ven. Shengyan has in Hong Kong Buddhism is through his writings.

Some of the Venerable's books, in particular those for beginners, are written in question and answer format, and provide answers to questions that modern day Buddhists will encounter; including Buddhist view points on contraception, divorce, inter marriage with non-Buddhists, and Christian concepts. Mabel recommended, and I did, read his books. A 39 year old informant Fred said he tends to prefer Ven. Shengyan when compared with Ven. Xingyun, because Ven. Shengyan "is more learned", referring to the fact that Ven. Shengyan has a doctorate degree in Buddhism Studies. When I met with a senior executive in the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, the lady gave me the book by

Ven. Shengyan on zhengxin Buddhism. This is one of his most widely read books advocating *zhengxin* and is claimed in the Dharma Drum Mountain web site to have sold over a million copies. When I interviewed the operators of the Buddhist magazine I mentioned, their position is that they would not consider having advertisements of Buddhist institutes in their magazine unless they are zhengxin Buddhism.

These proscriptions of non-zhengxin Buddhism have had important influence. The concept of zhengxin is today accepted as the “authentic” Buddhism by younger Buddhists in contrast to the folk Buddhism that most Hong Kong people grew up with. Many of the informants are from families that practice folk religion. Such families considered themselves ‘Buddhists’ because they used the term ‘worship Buddha’ (Baai Faht 拜佛) when worshipping the earth and heaven gods, which of course are based on a social political structure of the imperial era. Even productions of these folk religion stories on television are modernized to suit the audience’s taste. Dismissing folk religion as ‘mixin’ or old fashioned is relatively easy in a society that is as well educated as Hong Kong. The zhengxin that Ven. Shengyan advocates is a more modern interpretation of the sutra, explanations are given in terms of modern life, and the converts can easily relate to and identify with the rationality of the explanation.

The above is akin to Robert Weller’s emphasis on the “flexibility of interpretation as

people remake their religion in changing social conditions” (Weller 1987: 11). The basic ideology of ‘worshipping Buddha’ is the common bond amongst the different generations of Hong Kong Buddhists. As Weller wrote, “certain basic structures are indeed widely shared” (ibid: 169). Yet, one can argue that while there is a common belief in Buddha, there is also difference between the younger Hong Kong Buddhists’ tendencies to seek rationality versus the older generation’s blind faith. Ven. Shengyan’s writings satisfy the more intellectually oriented Buddhists’ search for spiritual answers while at the same time allowing the younger Buddhists to relate to the beliefs of their elder family members.

Ciji Gongdehui

Like the Dharma Drum Mountain, Ciji Gongdehui 慈濟功德會 founded by Ven. Zhengyan 證嚴法師 did not originally plan to start any representative branch here in Hong Kong. Also like the Dharma Drum Mountain, the Hong Kong office was founded by the Hong Kong followers of Rev. Zhengyan who brought books of the organization from Taiwan to Hong Kong on their own account. Again, some followers would lend their office or home for the meetings of the Hong Kong group. Their works in Hong Kong involved fund raising for flood victims in China, for victims of the September 21st,

1999 Taiwan earthquake, and volunteer social services for hospitals, homes for the blind and the elderly. Ciji advocate social services and environmental protection. This makes them both a secular and a modern organization. Both the Chinese University of Hong Kong (1993) and the University of Hong Kong (2001) conferred honorary doctorates on the founder, Rev. Zhengyan.

An informant Giles, a doctor, said

When I was in Taiwan, I observed the ceremony performed by Ciji in their hospital. People donate the body of the family member to the medical school. People literally queue up to donate the body to the autopsy class. The reason is that they (the Ciji Medical School) treat the deceased as a bodhisattva, they make a name block, each student must thank the deceased, at the end of the year the body is respectfully put back together and there is a ceremony in which the deceased is eulogized and then cremated. After observing this, I realize Ciji is of a much higher level than others in their respect for life. Be it in their hospital, education, schools, even the medical school, there is a general education about this (in the organization). They have a small shrine in the hospital, it is a Buddhist shrine of course, but if you are Christian, the shrine will turn and change in to a Christian chapel. That's true Buddhism; when one reaches the end of ones life they respect the dying one's belief. They do it very well. I've listen to her (Ven. Zhengyan) talk, you can seen the compassion through her body language. You can tell that it is from the heart ... I think Ciji is

the highest in compassion.

This is an example of how Ciji was able to impress a learned man who was trained in medical science to the point that makes him a Buddhist Sympathizer.

What are they teaching?

It is significant that the latter two TBOs arrival in Hong Kong was by “invitation”. There was, in marketing terms, a “pent up demand”. The Hong Kong Buddhists wanted these kinds of Buddhism. The TBOs in Hong Kong have been the catalyst for Hong Kong believers to find out more about the “authentic” teachings of Buddhism. The majority of my informants are from families that practice Chinese folk religion, many are aware of the Christian teachings as well, but the kind of Buddhism everyone seems to be interested in is *zhengxin*.

What is *zhengxin*? I mentioned that an executive of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association gave me a book by Ven. Shengyan. In it he said, “*Zhengxin* is the correct belief, appropriate declaration of faith, correct interpretation, straight behavior, true reliance” (“正信，就是正確的信仰，正當的信誓，正軌的信解，正直的信行，真正的信賴”) (Shengyan 1991:1). Ven. Shengyan is preaching a Buddhist doctrine according to the sutra, explaining Buddhist nomenclatures in simple modern day terms. Edwin thinks Hong Kong Buddhism is boring, and prefers Taiwanese Buddhism, which

he refers to as the three greatest Buddhist Halls, i.e. Fo Guang Shan, Ciji and Dharma Drum Mountain. He thinks they are positive and not just involved with funerals and death as most of the Buddhists Sangha of Hong Kong is.

Ven. Zhengyan, the founder of Ciji, advocates not just compassion towards other humans, but also a pro-active role of helping to relief other's suffering. She also advocates self reliance so that she or her followers will not take alms. That is in tune with the modern individualistic attitude in Hong Kong's younger generation. It is charity for the sake of charity while the provider of the charity does not have to suffer the indignity of relying on alms. The modern younger generation, more individualistic then those of the past are also aware of the importance of environmental protection. Ven. Zhengyan is strong in advocating environmental protection. This can be illustrated in my encounter of the members of this organization:

When I talked with one of her Hong Kong followers/volunteers in the Hong Kong Book Fair where Ciji had a stand, I was offered tea. While she poured out tea in a cup for me, the volunteer herself had a pocket size cup about half the length of her palm with a lid which she took out from her pocket and drank from. When I asked about it, she showed me her lunch box as well. She told me that the Venerable taught them to be thrifty on using earthly resources, so she packs her own meal along if she works or goes

out as volunteer to visit hospitals. In fact, each of the volunteers carries their own food. In Ven. Zhengyan's teaching, recycling of resources in this world is put in line with Buddhist teaching and reincarnation. Young and socially conscious people, not just Buddhists, can be receptive to Ven. Zhengyan's idea as the theme is very modern and up to date.

Rev. Xingyun's impact on Hong Kong Buddhism is by far the most important one amongst these three major TBO's in Hong Kong. In the past, listening to Buddhist sutra gave an image of something being very solemn; in contrast, the Ven. Xingyun's three days teaching in Hong Kong that I attended had a light but not casual atmosphere. The teaching took place in the Hong Kong Coliseum; on the first day he talked about Chan Sect Buddhism; the second day Pureland Sect Buddhism; and the third day Tibetan Buddhism. The stage was designed with three-levels, each representing one of the sects. Throughout the talks, he was accompanied by a choir of sangha who sang out the sutras the Venerable was discussing in a relatively modern melody. There was none of the Buddhist chanting I experienced in other Buddhist services here in Hong Kong. It had the same effect as an enjoyable concert. On the last day, each audience member was provided with a lotus lantern, and was asked to light it up for one of the sutra as it was sung out, waving the lantern as we joined in the song; almost all complied. A guest celebrity, Ms.

Kwong Mei Wan, also sang the Heart Sutra in Cantonese. It was comparable to any pop concert with a guest star appearance.

Rev. Xingyun literally rekindled the youth's interest in a relatively dull religion in the early 1980s. The writings of Rev. Shengyan appeal to the intellectual pursuits of the educated group of young believers. Rev. Zhengyan demonstrates to Hong Kong Buddhists what modern Buddhism can do within society. These great modern Buddhist leaders of Taiwan make the Hong Kong Buddhist leaders look pale.

Independent Religiosity

One of the effects of the TBOs activities in Hong Kong was to produce many converted Buddhists and Buddhist sympathizers. While some joined these TBOs Hong Kong centers, many choose not to, probably because of the busy schedule of secular lives and the inconvenient locations of the TBOs Buddhist halls. Ciji's Center is in Shatin and Dharma Drum Mountain's is in an industrial area. As a result, many of these people believe in Buddhism, but would not actively belong to any Buddhist organizations. They openly claim that they are Buddhists. Some would just say that they are Buddhist students. Edwin, a physiotherapist, does his own readings. In fact, he went to Ven. Xingyun's Fu Xiang Buddhist Hall's book shop and bought a teaching set and taught

himself to be a Buddhist teacher. He volunteered to teach Buddhism to the elderly patients in the hospital where he works. Daniel listened to a few talks, got some tapes and books and studies on his own. Giles never took refuge nor went to any Buddhist hall; he just read Buddhist books on his own and discussed Buddhism with his friends.

In the course of my research, I attended a Buddhist course in Chi Lin that met every Thursday evening. The teacher was a Theravada Sri Lankan monk. He told us in the first lesson that by attending a Buddhist class, whatever one's motivation is, the action itself would make the person a Buddhist student. Since all Buddhists are students following Buddha's teaching which are recorded as Sutras, all who listen to these words are Buddhists. In the case of ethnic identity, according to Fredrik Barth, "ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization...[with]...the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others...actors use ethnic identity to categorize themselves and others for purpose of interaction" (Barth 1969: 13-14). If we apply the same analogy to religious identity, one must accept the identity internally as well as the others accepting one's identity externally. While the teacher may wish to apply an identity of Buddhist on to the students, the students themselves have to accept that identity themselves before the identity would be realized. When I visited the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, an executive told me that they would define a Buddhist as a person "whose heart is towards

Buddha” 心中向佛. Because of the high degree of tolerance in this religion towards deviation in methods of worship, self proclaimed Buddhists would by definition be identified and accepted as Buddhist.

I bring up the above point because one can find many self-proclaimed Buddhists not really involved with any particular Buddhist institution and who have not participates in the ritual of taking refuge. I have identified these as Buddhists exhibiting ‘independent religiosity’. I read this phenomenon as these people’s desire to protect their independence and privacy. It also manifests the strength of individualism in the modern society of Hong Kong: Edwin took refuge twice, once in a ceremony conducted by Rev. Xingyun and once with another monk. He also volunteered for the Chi Lin Nunnery reconstruction project, but he would not study in any of Chi Lin’s Buddhist courses, nor would he associate himself with a Buddhist hall or temple. He prefers to buy his own books and read. In the mean time he also teaches Buddhism in a hospital. As mentioned, he has a whole set of books published by Fo Guang Shan to read at his own pace. He mentioned that he was approached by Buddhists who tried to persuade him to join some Buddhist halls. However, he seems to take some pride in stating that he “remained firm”.

Fred is even less involved with Buddhist organizations; he has not taken refuge, but nevertheless claims that he is a Buddhist student. He likes to listen to Buddhist talks in

Buddhist halls, civil centers, Hung Hom Coliseum (presumably Rev. Xingyun), yet he would not take refuge. Daniel read the Heart Sutra for over 10 years; he would listen to courses conducted by Buddhist monks, or get tapes that were distributed free outside some vegetarian restaurants. Even though he did have a lay instructor who got him started, that lay master left him a long time ago. His conversation demonstrated a belief in what the monks taught, but he never took refuge, and he does not identify himself with a particular master. On the other hand, he would give advices to his friends and colleagues citing Buddhist philosophy. Giles, who holds a senior teaching post in a science faculty of one of Hong Kong's tertiary institutions, is very low key in that he joined a Buddhist discussion group, but he does not have any Buddhist master nor has he taken refuge, and expresses consonance with Buddhism only when asked. I found out that he sympathizes with Buddhism only when I saw his congratulatory message in the front of a booklet commemorating a Buddhist event. Herbert was baptized as a Catholic, performed as an altar boy during Mass, but says he wants to be a Buddhist and study the philosophy, though he doesn't have time because his work is very demanding.

It seems to me that by the above informants' daily behavior, they were identified by the people surrounding them as Buddhists. They did it in their choice of words and their mannerisms. They are Buddhists who do not belong to a Buddhist institution, and five in

a sample of 40 informants can be considered noteworthy. More significantly, they are all men. I would suggest that being in a commercial world, they would interpret openly expressing what they believe would be interpreted by a rational society as exhibiting a sign of weakness.

The impact of TBO's in Hong Kong

Steve Bruce mentioned that “New Age” is a term used loosely to describe a very wide range of beliefs and practices which became popular in the 1980's (Bruce: 1996). The audiences are generally structured around mass distribution of the word, spoken and printed. The circulatory system of the “New Age” beliefs is made up of books, magazines, audio cassettes and public lectures. Even though they are not the same as “New Age” beliefs, the TBO's, and perhaps even other international Buddhist organizations in the 21st Century, are using a similar circulatory system to spread their teaching, with an added medium of the television, VCD, CD and the internet. This circulatory system has a profound effect in the spreading of Modern Buddhism into Hong Kong. Because of the common written language between Taiwan and Hong Kong, the modernization of Buddhism in Taiwan was easily transmitted to Hong Kong. With the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, interest in learning Putonghua facilitates the oral transmission of

Buddhism in Mandarin. Fo Guang Shan have their own free TV channel on the Now television network of PCCW, and Ciji also have their own free TV channel on the i-Cable network.

John Shannon has suggested that the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, an institution dominated by the Tiantai School 天台宗, tends to be on the orthodox side, and is perceived by some local sangha as an “Old Monks’ Club”. Citing the difference between the monks of Northern and Southern origin, Shannon presents a picture of the sangha communities in Hong Kong as being not united (Shannon 2003). Indeed, the most well known Buddhist monks came from China originally, and after decades of staying in Hong Kong, are still unable to speak Cantonese. The highly visible monk of Hong Kong origin, Rev. Chi Wai 智慧法師 did not help the image of the local Buddhist institutions when he was involved in a controversial dispute with the Hong Kong SAR government concerning land rights in the vicinity of the Po Lin Monastery in 2002. Rev. Chi Wai threatened to close the Po Lin Monastery, where the Big Buddha is located, to tourists. In the end the Hong Kong Government relented. A local popular weekly magazine put him on the cover with the caption “Ferocious Monk” (惡和尚 ngok woh seuhng). Younger Buddhists I interviewed simply expressed their dislike of Rev. Chi Wai and prefer and admire the three TBO’s.

There are younger and more educated monks of local origin in Hong Kong. Ven. Sik Hinhung is one. But he is less visible to the Hong Kong public. In a conference, Ven. Sik Hinhung and Leung Yuefai presented a very high figure of people seeking ordination in Po Lin Monastery in the 2002 session: a figure of 500 persons, as compared the historical averages of 59 through 193 persons per session in the past. However, many of those who sought ordination were not from Hong Kong (Sik and Leung 2003); they were mainly from Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. To me, this reflects firstly that the stature of Hong Kong as a global city that attracts migrants extends even to the religious ones, but secondly, it shows that the Hong Kong Buddhist institutions seem not to be able to reach out to attract young Buddhists in Hong Kong.

Culturally, Hong Kong people have to come to terms with the fact that even though they were economically superior to the mainland a decade ago, they are now projected to become economically dependent on the Chinese mainland. Do the flexibilities adopted to cope with political and economical changes extend to religion? How much has political and economic reality influenced religious choice? For one thing, the fact remains that the Hong Kong representative in the PRC's National People's Congress (NPC) for religion is a Buddhist monk, Rev. Chi Wai of Po Lin Monastery. While at the same time, the Catholic Bishop, now Cardinal, in Hong Kong seems to remain in unfriendly terms with

the power center, Beijing.

When Ms. Liu Yandong, Director of the Communist Party's United Front Work Department came to Hong Kong, she hosted a dinner for leaders of the six main religions of Hong Kong: Roman Catholicism, Daoism, Confucianism⁵, Protestant, Buddhism and Islam. The fact that she had time to host a dinner for the religions' leaders and not for the members of the Democratic Party demonstrates that the Central Government wishes to project the image that freedom of religion still exists in Hong Kong. The government of China chose to extend its goodwill towards the people of Hong Kong through Buddhism by being cooperative in building the Big Buddha and the Chi Lin Tang style complex, plus the exhibition of Buddhist artifacts. The modern Hong Kong Buddhist institutions would need to be engaged with politics primarily because they need to react to this context. But such political relations are not what most of what Hong Kong Buddhists are looking for. How much has such a high political profile turned the Hong Kong Buddhists off from the local institutions to the benefit of TBOs or pushed them to belief independence? Some of the informant I interviewed expressed distaste for the Buddhist

⁵ Prof. Ge Zhaoguang of Qinghua University once said, the difference between folk religion and Daoism is that the former is not formally recognized by the government while the latter is. Confucianism is considered to be a religion even though institutionally, it hardly is one. Perhaps the reason why it is included as a religious institution is because the Hong Kong government at that point in time recognized it as one. I have heard a claim that all Chinese are Confucianists, the argument being that Confucianism is the basis of Chinese culture and therefore all Chinese believe in Confucianism. Just as a claim that all attendees of a class on Buddhism are Buddhists, it is an argument that is so broad as to be almost meaningless.

leader, Rev. Chi Wai, getting involved with politics, though I have to add, there seems to be a partiality towards Cardinal Zen. Perhaps the image of Rev. Chi Wai is that he only spoke for his monastery, whereas Cardinal Zen spoke for some weaker sector of the population, such as the children of illegal immigrants.

My impression from speaking with the representatives and nuns of the Chi Lin Nunnery is that they are very careful with their comments. Certainly, as an icon of such high visibility, they need to be politically correct and supportive of the authority, even when they are speaking to a research student from a local university. Who know who might read the thesis? On the other hand, when behind the cloak of anonymity, lay Buddhists are critical of mixing religion with politics.

“Cultural Buddhism” of Chi Lin Nunnery

The modernization of Buddhism in Hong Kong to a degree goes together with the popularization of Buddhism. Let us consider the Heart Sutra. It's a popular sutra of 260 words and was composed by Xuan Zang 玄奘, the famous monk who traveled to India in the Tang Dynasty and brought back many sutras to China. The heart sutra is supposed to contain the essence of all the sutras he brought back. In the more solemn rituals, this sutra would be chanted out in Putonghua in a rather monotonous tune. In 1995, during the

Fund Raising effort of Chi Lin Nunnery for its redevelopment, over 30 popular singers including the late Anita Mui, Alan Tam and Jackie Chan, recorded the Heart Sutra sung in Cantonese in a modern musical arrangement so it could be sold to raise funds. It proved to be popular amongst young Buddhists. In fact, one of my relatives, of about 30 years of age, offered to lend me a copy because she believes that to listen to it would be a form of reciting the sutra, which would not just lower stress but would also contribute to my merit in Buddhism. Listening to the sutra being sung out in Cantonese with a modern tune and arrangement is much easier to appreciate than if it is chanted in the traditional manner.

I have mentioned that Chi Lin's fund raising was a very high profile event. Many Hong Kong popular culture personalities were involved in events such as the recording of the Heart Sutra mentioned above. In fact, originally, because Hui Goon Man, one of Hong Kong's well known actors, used to study in the Chi Lin Nunnery's school, he was consulted. Later Eric Tsang Chi Wai found out that not many people knew about Chi Lin and advised the nun of such, and the nun involved suggested that Eric Tsang should be the Fund Raising Committee Chairman, which he accepted. Mr. Tsang helped in broadcasting the Chi Lin name throughout Hong Kong and the nunnery was on TV several times. Since then the nunnery has continuously been linked with the names of many pop culture personalities. The common school anthem of the Chi Lin Kindergarten,

Primary School and Evening School that is played during school ceremonies is a recording sung by the famous Hong Kong pop singer, Alan Tam.

It seems that the nunnery wishes to retain its high profile and continue its effort in popularizing Buddhism through the cultural angle, both popular and high cultures. The nunnery has also published many books on formal Buddhist Studies; they are involved with the Hong Kong University's Master of Buddhist Studies degree by providing talks to the students. They also organize scholarly talks on Buddhist topics; I attended one conducted by Professor Victor Mair. During a ceremony, a senior nun, Rev. Wan Fan announced that because of "globalization", Chi Lin Nunnery had decided to push ahead with the plan to run their post secondary school Cultural Center. The Chi Lin Cultural Center has two sections, Philosophy and Religion. The Religion Section runs courses on different Sects of Buddhist teachings.

The theme of the redeveloped monastery is that of a reconstruction of Tang period design. The lotus pond garden in front of the main monastery gate is a public park but Chi Lin built it to compliment their monastery complex's design. The new monastery attracted some discussions amongst my informants: some thinks that it's a waste of money; others said that it's good to get people interested in Buddhism, even though to attract people through aesthetic appeal is termed by one informant to be of "low level". In

the words of the senior nun, Rev. Wan Fan, it seems that Chi Lin senses the encroachment of the TBO's. The route of using modern pop culture and broadening Buddhist doctrine's education is Chi Lin's attempt to recapture the younger Hong Kong Buddhists' heart and mind. This seems to be succeeding in some way. According to the words of Edwin, "The elderly doesn't need the doctrine, they just believe and recite Buddha, but the younger ones or middle age: they want to know the teachings before they can believe." In talking about the Buddhist courses offered, "Chi Lin is the largest in this; even Faht Heung 佛香 (Fo Guang Shan's Fo Xiang Buddhist Hall) couldn't do as well. There is a Faht Hohk Yuhn, 佛學園 at Tseun Wan, but [it] is of different character. Chi Lin's is a bit broader, it has many topics, it is very wide (in teaching subject)."

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Taiwanese Buddhist Organizations are involved with the revived interests of Hong Kong's younger generation in Buddhism. With their new approach, the TBO's make the religion relevant in terms of modern values. Ven. Xingyun's teaching sessions in Hong Kong, which started in the 1980's, have been one of the key factors inciting interest in Buddhism amongst my informants. Because of this new interest and the circumstantial development around it, Chi Lin Nunnery found itself

to be well positioned to serve this group of less traditional Buddhists in Hong Kong. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Chi Lin Nunnery arose from an obscure nunnery in the back water of Hong Kong to become an icon of the Hong Kong SAR. The Chi Lin Nunnery's success in participating in the 21st Century proliferation of Buddhism in Hong Kong was due to these reasons: the redevelopment of their nunnery into a spectacular wooden complex in a densely populated area accessible by the MTR raised their visibility and accessibility to the Hong Kong public; the nuns' determination to emphasize the image of the nunnery in the theme of Chinese historical culture (to stay in line with the overall political trend towards nationalism propagated by the Central government); to serve the utilitarian role of providing a 'cultural' icon to compliment the SAR government's effort to promote tourism; to maintain their relevance to the society by running education institutions and a nursing home; and finally to serve the younger Buddhists' quest of knowledge of the doctrine through their education institution.

Chapter 3: The Rise of Chi Lin Nunnery

Chi Lin's History:

The Chi Lin Nunnery was founded in 1934 by two Buddhist monks, Ven. Wai Um, 葦庵法師, and his teacher, Ven. Gok Yat 覺一法師. They planned to build a nunnery and a training school for Buddhist nuns and a wealthy man sold his villa to them at a very low price. Before the Second World War, the nunnery site was considered to be very remote, "quite far from the Kai Tak Airport", as an informant put it. In fact, it was considered to be in the wilderness. After World War II, the Nunnery building itself, which was the original villa, was totally dilapidated. At the same time, refugees from China set up squatter huts in the surrounding Diamond Hill area. In 1946, the nunnery began to offer free schooling to the refugee children. It was the only free school to serve the area from Diamond Hill to Kowloon City during that time. It also operated a canteen that offered free lunches to the students and their families. In fact, Chi Lin offered free lunch up till the 80's. In the 50's, they had some help from benefactors, and by 1957 were able to build a home for the elderly and an orphanage. Chi Lin also started a library of Buddhist books in the 70's. My informant Rev. Z, a nun of Chi Lin, gave me an oral history of how the

library got started,

My own master joined Chi Lin then (1970's) and considered what kind of resources Chi Lin could offer for people who are interested in researching Buddhism. She thought a library would be a good thing to start. At that time there was no complete Buddhist library in Hong Kong. For anyone who wished to do research on the subject, the researcher would have to go to different libraries to collect readings. My Master [also] wondered how in the past, a large number of people could live together in a monastery in harmony; she questioned how it was managed and investigated space usage. She visited many temples in China to investigate and also studied Buddhist statues related to the nun's practices. She collected pictures of the temples with her camera.

She knew a Christian architect who saw the pictures she took and he suggested to her to exhibit the pictures, in the course of which, the source of the pictures were systematically referenced.... From Shanxi there was a good collection of Buddhist images representing the different dynasties in China from the Tang dynasty onward. She decided to publicize the religious art. The result was a book published on a few representative temples for each dynasty with the permission and co-operation of the Chinese government.

Rev. Z in effect identified her Master as the person who should take credit as the photographer which enables the exhibition and publication of the book of Shanxi temples' photo collection to take place in the early 1990's. I have seen the book

published by Chi Lin Nunnery; it was beautifully photographed but does not acknowledge the photographer. This is Rev. Z's way to inform me of her Master's secular achievements. In fact, my informant seems to want people to recognize the contribution of her Master. As a Chinese saying goes, "The emperor is not anxious but the eunuch is". The photo exhibition in 1991 is mentioned in the Po Lin Monastery web site. Po Lin claimed it to be a joint project. On the other hand, there is no mention of it in Chi Lin's web site. The significant point to note is that Rev. Z's Master seems to be modest about this. Rev. Z acknowledged that the entire project would not have been completed without the co-operation of the Chinese Government. So another angle of looking at the issue is that the Central government has laid plenty of groundwork to build a good relation with Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong. Rev. Z continued to talk of the other educational achievement of Chi Lin:

We converted the disused two-storey orphanage to a small library, and by the 80's to early 90's we started communication with other Buddhist scholastic and cultural institutes. We collected materials for temple constructions from China and shared with other institutes.

In addition to sharing these with other Hong Kong Buddhist and other religious institutions, we organized exhibitions in Singapore, Malaysia, Beijing, Canada, Hawaii etc... It was through our understanding of the traditional Chinese Buddhist art we evolved to collectors/curators. It was during the 70's and 80's that communication exchanges were made, enriching our library's collection. From then on, we would publish many Buddhist magazines. And from the 80's onward, we expanded our communication exchanges.

What is the significance of these comments? None of these are in the Chi Lin web site, nor is this information in any other of their publications. My interpretation is that even though Rev. Z has renounced the secular world; she still feels that the world needs to recognize the contribution of Chi Lin Nunnery. The Master was the Art Director of the Po Lin Monastery Big Buddha project. Rev. Z claimed that it was her Master that designed the angle and face of the Buddha head. But it was clear that Po Lin Monastery took all the lime light because the Big Buddha is identified as a statue whose idea for construction was conceived by the monks in Po Lin Monastery, and it belongs to Po Lin Monastery.

In 1989, the nunnery learned of a major change forthcoming: The building of the Tate's Cairn Tunnel and the redevelopment of the entire Diamond Hill area. Chi Lin Nunnery made the conscious decision not to relocate, even though a developer in Hong Kong offered to exchange their Diamond Hill site for a more remote site in the New Territories, with the promise of footing the redevelopment costs on their behalf. Their decision not to move from their Diamond Hill site meant that they needed to raise funds for their nunnery's redevelopment. To raise fund, the nunnery had a "one tile one wish" fund raising campaign in which a benefactor can have his or her name written on a tile.

To Rev. Z, the temple is a place for the public and the temple does not belong to the

nuns who live there. She said, “We just ‘hang a tag’ here”, referring to the symbol of residence made by sangha hanging the tag with one’s name on it in the monastery. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction of the nunnery, but it is not considered to be a personal property. The reconstruction started in 1989, the official opening was in 1998, and the final completion was in 2001. The total reconstruction costs were \$700 to \$800 million with the Hong Kong Jockey Club contributing to the construction of the home for the elderly.

One of the reasons why their fund raising effort in the late 90's was a resounding success was due to their ability to recruit a popular artist, Eric Tsang to chair the Fund Raising Committee. During this Fund Raising effort, over 30 popular singers including the late Anita Mui, Alan Tam, Jackie Chan etc, recorded the Heart Sutra sung in modern musical arrangement CDs were then sold to raise funds. Also, souvenirs were sold in the Ocean Center Shopping Arcade and patrons were sought. Eric Tsang further raised the profile of the nunnery by organizing a variety show on the Jade Channel on television.

The nunnery chose to build their monastery in Tang Dynasty inspired design, entirely in wood. It is a beautifully built monastery complex and captured the imagination of the Hong Kong population. There are number of reasons why the nunnery chose to built their monastery complex in Tang Dynasty style: Rev. Z told me that her Master

discovered a Wa Dong 瓦當 (tile guard) when she was digging a temple ruin during the 70's near Guangzhou. At that time, the Master didn't know that the Nunnery would be redeveloped. The Master took a photograph of the tile guard, and later discovered that it was a Tang dynasty tile. Rev. Z further explained to me that before the Tang dynasty, there were no temples, only pagodas; all activities took place in the pagoda. She continued that it was during the Tang dynasty that large Buddhist statues were made. The pagodas could not contain such statues, so the elite started to give up their own houses for the Buddhist statues. Therefore, according to Rev. Z, it was because there were Buddhist statues that there were temples, she also expressed her appreciation of the artistry and wisdom of Tang buildings' details, which at the same time were practical.

The growth of Chi Lin Nunnery epitomizes the development of Buddhist institutions that accompanied the growth and development of Hong Kong society. It functions as a social service institution, a religious institution and a teaching institution. The offerings in their temple halls are limited to fresh fruits and flowers, the oil lamps in the altars burn smokeless oil. There are no divination blocks, no fortune telling sticks, no burning of paper offerings, no selling of joss-sticks (The explanation given to the worshippers is that the monastery is a wooden building and there is a fire hazard in the burning of any offerings. However, I was informed by the nun that in reality, the nuns themselves have

personal distaste for the smoke of large scale incense burning). This is a relatively cleaner and more serene worship method and by itself attracted newly converted Buddhists. An example is Wendy, who expresses her preference of such ‘modernized’ worship in an earlier chapter.

But the Chi Lin Nunnery rose to prominence not based on its serene method of worship (they too have their share of chanting ceremonies), but based on their construction of a Tang dynasty style monastery, and recently, their commitment to build as the main contractor of the government, the Hammer Hill Road Public Garden, which is in front of their monastery. They incurred a great additional expense, out of Chi Lin's own funds, and will make this garden a copy of a historic garden, the Jiangshouju Yuanchi 絳守居園池.

The Tang Dynasty Reproduction

Chi Lin Nunnery is not the first temple to try to reproduce an historic period design. All Chinese temples with their red and gold pillars and green tiles are reproductions of an ancient Chinese style of architecture. What makes Chi Lin's monastery complex different is their completely wooden construction which they claim it to be a copy of Tang Dynasty temples. And Chi Lin has no qualms in admitting that they copied an existing Japanese

temple because they argue that the Japanese temple is a more ‘authentic’ copy of a Tang Dynasty temple. The Todaiji temple in Japan played a significant role in the Chinese Buddhist mission to Japan. In 710, the Japanese Emperor tried to construct Japan’s first permanent capital in Heijo, modern day Nara, modeled after Changan, the then capital of China. By comparison, Heijo was only one third the size of Changan. Todaiji was originally constructed by Japanese Emperor Shomu in 745 near Heijo (Nara). He invited the Chinese monk Jian Zhen 鑑真 six times to go to Japan to Todaiji to supervise the training and ordination of Japanese monks. By the time Jian Zhen arrived in 754, he was blinded by disease. Still, he instructed two emperors as well as many priests. In 759, he retired to another temple he built in Japan, Toshodaiji, where he died five years later.

To commemorate Jian Zhen, in 1973 his hometown of Yangzhou 揚州 erected a memorial hall, the Yangzhou Daiming Temple 揚州大明寺. Jian Zhen’s hometown claimed that the temple was “in the style of the Toshodaiji”. However, if we compare the photo by Gao and Lai (Gao and Lai 1988: front pages) which shows the 1973 Yangzhou memorial hall, to a photo by Suzuki (Suzuki 1980: 116) which shows the present day picture of Toshodaiji, we can see that even with the benefit of international travel, Yangzhou officials still got it wrong. The present day Toshodaiji is larger, with seven bays 七間, when compares with the Yangzhou reconstruction, which seems similar in

design to the model of Toshodaiji, but the reconstruction has five bays 五間 only. Ancient Chinese building practices put significance in the number of bays of each building. The Emperor's palace can have the maximum nine bays, so others are prohibited to build more than nine bays to exhibit lower statuses. The lesser bays in the Yangzhou replica of Toshodaiji would put it not similar to but of lower stature than Toshodaiji. In addition there is a major difference between Chinese temples' wooden roof versus the Japanese roofs. Throughout the years, Toshodaiji was completely rebuilt. There is also a model of the original version. Had the officials tried to copy Toshodaiji in its form before reconstruction, the finish product should have been something that looked like Toshodaiji's original version's model before reconstruction, which is also shown by Suzuki (Suzuki 1980: 122). These differences may be significant for architects and art historians, but they do not matter to my informants. What is more important is not whether the reproduction is true to the original, but the claim of authenticity. These differences do not affect the 'authenticity' Chi Lin Nunnery.

Chi Lin's attempt to replicate the past

Chi Lin Nunnery claimed that it redeveloped its nunnery in a Tang Dynasty inspired style. The Nunnery acknowledged to the public that the roof ridge decoration of the main

hall, the “eagle lips” 鷗吻, is copied from the present Todaiji Main Hall because Todaiji maintains the Tang Dynasty decoration. The Nanchan Temple 南禪寺 of Wutaishan 五台山, was built in the Tang Dynasty 782AD. The picture in the Complete Chinese Art Committee’s publication (Zhongguo mei shu quan ji bian ji wei yuan hui 中國美術全集編輯委員會 1988: 22) shows that the Nanchan Temple does have very similar “eagle lips” 鷗吻 design decoration. So I will not dispute if the analogy is applied to the “eagle lips” only. On the other hand, according to ancient Chinese building scholar Liu Dun-zhen 劉敦楨 (Liu 1984), Wutaishan’s other famous temple, Foguang Temple 佛光寺 Main Hall, is larger and more representative of the Tang period. The Foguang Temple does not have a similar “eagle lips” design on its ridge. In other words, simply having similar “eagle lips” design does not signify authenticity.

During the Chi Lin redevelopment project, the nunnery held an exhibition, “Chi Lin Redevelopment: An Exhibition of Tang Monastic Architecture”. It is difficult to distinguish the ‘nationality’ of an ancient wooden building. But there are several features of the Chi Lin temple that do not match other ancient Chinese temples.

First, in the brochure of that exhibition, the layout map showed a square base pagoda at the top right hand corner, the Wan Fo Pagoda (Ten Thousand Buddha Pagoda 萬佛塔). In the English brochure, the pagoda was described as being “of great symbolic

significance in traditional Buddhist architecture. It symbolizes a gradual process of ascent in the purification of the mind”. In the Chinese brochure, the pagoda was described as “following the Tang Dynasty’s square design, while externally it looks to be seven stories high, internally, it is only five stories high. The top of the pagoda has a *tacha* 塔刹 [pagoda finial], which represents the Buddhist view of the world.” The diagram of the pagoda was reproduced in the brochure.

We can compare what is published in their brochure with the two Chinese *tacha* shown by the Complete Chinese Art Committee (Zhongguo mei shu quan ji bian ji wei yuan hui 中國美術全集編輯委員會 1988: 18) which provides pictures of a brick *tacha* and a wooden *tacha*. The wooden *tacha* is described as: “在露出塔頂部份築基座，上承露盤、數層金屬的相輪、華蓋、火焰、寶珠等” (translates as: “Put a base at the top of the pagoda that is exposed, placed on top of it is a dew plate, several layers of metal wheels, [a] decorated cover, [a] flame, [a] sacred jewel etc.”) (Ibid: 17). The only specific detail given is that the metal wheels are of an odd number. This compares with the Japanese equivalent of *tacha* (in Japanese it is called the *sorin* 相輪) which Suzuki described thus: “The pagoda is marked by a roof crowned with a metal finial (*sorin*) usually made of bronze. The finial has a square base (*roban*) over which is a small dome that looks like an invert bowl (*fukubachi*), with lotus petals (*ukebana*) placed on top. Around the central

shaft are usually nine metal rings (*kurin*). Above this is a filigreed metal ornament (*suien*) extending at right angles to the shaft in four directions. On the shaft above is first a spherical shape (*ryusha*) and at the very top a bulbous-shaped form (*hoju*) symbolizing the sacred jewel” (Suzuki 1980: 16). The Chinese description of the *tacha* is broader and more flexible. From photos available, most of the Chinese *tacha* count seven metal rings as compared with the Japanese’s nine metal rings. Also Chinese *tacha* designs are not as uniform as Japanese *sorin*. If one examines the photo of the Wan Fu Pagoda of Chi Lin in their web site and the photo in their brochure, we can find that Wan Fu Pagoda’s *tacha* fits the more restrictive Japanese description of *sorin*. In other words, the pagoda’s design is more Japanese than Chinese.

According to Suzuki, the Japanese wooden pagoda has a stronger incline for the roof of the top storey, made possible by their local innovation, the “hidden roof” technique. Another characteristic of Japanese wooden construction is the parallel rafter rather than the fan rafter of the Tang Chinese design. The “hidden roof” technique, when applied on the rafter, enables the exposed rafters to be set at a gentler angle. If we consider various Japanese pagoda examples shown by Popham (Popham 1990) and Suzuki (Ibid), we can find the Japanese roof characteristics in these pagodas: the stronger incline at the top roof, less slope of the roof of the lower level, plus the distinctive Japanese *sorin* (*tacha*). Based

on the illustration in their brochure, the Chi Lin Wan Fu Pagoda, looks more like the pagodas outside the Todaiji reconstruction model shown by Suzuki (Ibid: 114-115).

We can compare Chi Lin's pagoda with the Shanxi Yingxian Fogongsi 山西 應縣 佛宮寺 which was built in 1056AD when that part of China was under the rule of Liao. There are not many ancient pure wood pagodas in China, although there is a square pagoda made of wood mixed with bricks, dating to the Song Dynasty, the Fogongsi pagoda is the only existing all wooden ancient pagoda in China. Chi Lin pagoda does not resemble the pagodas shown in the Complete Chinese Art Committee publication (Zhongguo mei shu quan ji bian ji wei yuan hui 中國美術全集編輯委員會 1988: 15). Visitors are not allowed to see the Wan Fu Pagoda in the Chi Lin Nunnery; the reason given is that it is too close to the Elderly Home and visitors may disturb the elderly. As such, not many people have actually seen the pagoda. The purpose of the above analysis is to demonstrate that with all the good intention to reproduce the Tang Dynasty design, after more than 1,500 years, it is impossible for one to make an 'authentic' copy. Chi Lin's pagoda can not achieve this because no one can be sure what a Tang Dynasty pagoda should look like.

Discussion on the architecture of the redeveloped Chi Lin

According to Rev. Z, the Japanese initially learned their wooden construction method from the Chinese. In fact, Popham illustrates the development of Japanese construction technique in his book (Popham 1990) and in there, he described Chinese Tang dynasty style cloud pattern bracket was applied in building the Horyu Temple (or Horyuji) at Nara. But that was in the seventh century: by the eighth century; a far more complex bracket system was mastered by the Japanese. For example, Popham illustrated that the cloud pattern bracket in Horyuji in Nara had developed to a three-stepped bracket complex used in the Yakushiji construction a century later (Popham 1990: 48). The architectural style originally imported from China had undergone a localization process in Japan such that there are distinguishable differences. In fact, there are many bracket styles that can be found in historical Chinese wooden buildings. On the other hand, it does seem that Chi Lin' wooden monastery tried to be as close to the known Tang Dynasty design as possible. The bracket design used in Chi Lin's wooden buildings is of the primitive type, similar to those of the Horyu Temple at Nara. The rafter design is fan style. Japanese wooden buildings were able to have parallel style rafters because of their local innovation of the "hidden roof".

We have seen two cases in this chapter of how modern society tries to reproduce buildings of the past, the Yangzhou Daiming Temple 楊州大明寺 and the Chi Lin Nunnery: The former tried to reproduce a Japanese temple, the Toshodaiji, which has evolved to a building with a larger roof, while Chi Lin Nunnery reconstructed a Tang Dynasty style monastery complex. If the Toshodaiji could install the Western-style truss framing during its Meiji-era reconstruction, it verifies that we can only view the modern wooden building in Yangzhou as an attempt to copy the Toshodaiji of the past which is not the same as the Toshodaiji of the present. The subject that Chi Lin Nunnery admits that they copied: Todaiji, is another example of an ancient building that has undergone many historical changes and reconstructions. The change in its inner structure represents the ever changing know-how of the society it serves.

At first sight, an observer can question whether the design of the redeveloped Chi Lin Nunnery is really a Tang Dynasty design or a Japanese wooden temple design. Unlike most traditional Chinese temples or grand houses, the nunnery's pillars are not painted red and gold. In fact, the complex is in the simple natural wood color, more like the Japanese Toshodaiji. One could perhaps speculate that the original intention of Chi Lin Nunnery *was* to build a Japanese style monastery; the nuns may have preferred the Japanese design over those we see at Po Lin Monastery for its simplicity and serenity, but

the political situation at the time induced them to declare the complex to be in Tang Dynasty style, particularly since they had to raise funds from the public. Except for the designers themselves, no one else knows the real intentions.

The point here is not to pursue authenticity or accuracy of the temple as Tang Dynasty style, but to accept observers' interpretation of the meanings of the finished products. All the informants I interviewed, whether or not affiliated with Chi Lin, accept the buildings as "Tang Dynasty style" buildings. No one would dispute that it is a very beautifully designed and constructed wooden complex. The Chi Lin Nunnery's wooden buildings are promoted officially by the Hong Kong SAR government Tourism Board as a Tang Dynasty style building. At the same time, it evokes a collective cultural heritage memory of the Chinese population. Other than the religious message, the wooden complex serves to reinforce the 'Chineseness' of the Hong Kong SAR both to the local population and overseas visitors. The nunnery definitely enhances the image of Buddhism in Hong Kong.

The Other Hardware - The Hammer Hill Road Garden:

On Jan. 23, 2003, the Hong Kong government contracted the Chi Lin Nunnery to construct the Hammer Hill Road public Garden. According to press reports, the 33,000 sq. m. garden will be built based on the Jiangshouju Yuanchi (I will refer to it as the

Jiangshou Garden from now on) in Shanxi, China 中國 山西 絳守居園池. The garden has been on the negotiation table for a few years. Ever since Chi Lin Nunnery completed the redevelopment of their monastery complex in 1998, they have been petitioning the Hong Kong government to construct the adjacent public garden as a Chinese garden. The idea is for the garden to be built in a complimentary design to the monastery complex. In October 2002, the press reported that the total project would cost HK\$245 million, and the government would only pay HK\$177 million, with Chi Lin Nunnery paying the rest⁶. Ever since the inception of the Tang Dynasty design monastery complex, it has been the Nunnery's goal to have a compatible garden adjacent to them. According to my nunnery informant, "The architect who advised us [in the redevelopment project of the monastery] was trained at MIT. He emphasized the architecture blending with the environment including that outside one's own property." The Nunnery seems willing to foot the HK\$68 million for this architectural blending.

I went to the Legislative Council Secretariat office where the documents of Chi Lin's presentation to the Government Finance Committee are open to the public, to view the bid document. The garden will have special plants, rock gardens, water ways and Chinese style structures. It promises to be a beautiful Garden with all the aspects of a

⁶ Ming Pao 21 Oct., 2002, page A14.

Chinese Classical Literati Garden. In addition to the compatibility with the Chi Lin Nunnery proper; it will create a beautiful recreational space for local residents. An additional justification is that it will also attract tourists to the Wong Tai Sin District. The Chi Lin Nunnery has a Lotus Pond Garden at its front gate, even though that is a public garden, the design of the garden totally blends with the wooden buildings to such an extent that it is not obvious that the garden is a public one while the monastery is private. The Lotus Pond Garden leads to a walkway, completed at the same time as the nunnery proper, also in the same style as the garden, which connects to the site of the Hammer Hill Garden. One can see that the whole design of the Chi Lin redevelopment project has included the Hammer Hill Garden right from the start. Why would Chi Lin be interested in doing something like this?

To the nuns, the nunnery is not their private property. The nunnery was registered as a non-profit making limited company since 1963 in accordance to the Hong Kong tax law. By taking tonsure, the nuns renounced all earthly possessions. The official explanation from the nunnery is that the garden is something for the Hong Kong people. Indeed, there is no denying that the nunnery is providing a service to the community by building the garden. But the construction of the garden adjacent to the monastic complex itself by Chi Lin has the effect of ensuring the surrounding scenery compliments the design theme of

the Nunnery. Since the monastic complex is the spiritual estate of the nunnery, it does not matter if the nunnery does not own the garden. Their objective as Buddhist sangha has never been to own it: the surrounding ambience is what is at stake.

The Significance of Chinese Temples' Surroundings

In order to understand the reason behind Chi Lin's decision to redevelop the Hammer Hill, we should proceed to Zhao Guanghui's book on Chinese temples' surrounding sceneries to understand the religious significance (Zhao 1987). According to Zhao, temple parks are a combination of the temple constructions, man made scenery and natural scenery. Instead of being constrained by palace rules or sizes of sites as applied to imperial or private gardens, temple parks could be of larger size or space. Most wooded hill environments would be selected based on scenic beauty. According to Zhao, Buddhist and Daoist temples have historically competed for each other's temple sites; these included scenic sites in Emei Shan and Wutai Shan. Temple sites include: the peaks of mountains or hills, within valleys, by a river or stream, at the edge of cliffs, in caves, or a combination of the above. Dramatic landscapes are selected. Temples are constructed according to the site environment to enhance the scenery. The access road to a temple, *xiangdao* 香道, serves as a prelude for the scenery and the temple itself has to offer, and at the same time prepares the mind of pilgrims for worship; the natural scenic beauty

therefore has religious significance. But how is this relevant to the topic of Hammer Hill Road Garden? For one thing the Hammer Hill Road Garden is in the middle of a built up area. Chi Lin Nunnery, after the redevelopment of Diamond Hill, is in the middle of a modern town, with a shopping mall in close proximity. The site environment is definitely not one of a temple park amongst valleys, streams or hills.

The Jiangshouju Garden itself has an interesting history. According to Chen Erhe (Chen 1989), the Jiangshou Garden was built behind the magistrate's office. The city itself was built in 583 AD. The office itself was built on a plateau between two mountains and two rivers. According to the Shanxi Province Antiquity Research Center (Shanxi Province Antiquity Research: 1994), during the early Sui Dynasty, there was a drought; in 596 AD, the emperor ordered an irrigation project that involved constructing a pond to irrigate the farms in the area. In addition, a small pavilion was to be built. By 605 AD, there was a revolt led by the emperor's brother and soil was removed to construct ramparts; as a result of the soil removal, another even larger pond was made. By the Tang Dynasty, the site was recognized as a scenic place. Many historically famous scholars have composed prose to express the natural beauty of the garden and its ponds. From literary records, we know the Jiangshou Garden had gone through many changes in its appearance. Chen Erhe was able to reconstruct the layout of Jiangshou Garden according

to the Tang, Sung and Qing dynasties literary descriptions. When I went to the Legislative Council Secretariat Office, I was able to confirm that Chi Lin had indeed presented Chen Erhe's reconstructed Jiangshou Garden Tang Dynasty layout.

Chi Lin Nunnery declared that the redeveloped monastery is a Tang Dynasty style wooden building with all the historical meaning of the Tang Dynasty when China was at one of its heights of prosperity and spender. Whoever enters the monastery will have an experience most Hong Kong people would never have as city dwellers: i.e., be surrounded by the serene setting of a large wooden Buddhist complex. The image of Chi Lin Nunnery's design has the effect of evoking the cultural heritage memory of Hong Kong Chinese. According to Clifford Geertz: "Cultural 'heritage' of a people, of a place, of a nation, is not some solid, unmoving block of objects, practices, beliefs, and understandings, a settled, crystalline structure of traditions and customs that time and tourism, development and modernity, can only erode, disrupt, pollute, or destroy. It is something that is constantly changing, constantly being reconstructed and recreated, in response to new circumstances and emerging needs" (Geertz 1997: 19). Chi Lin Nunnery's monastery is a reconstruction of Hong Kong people's Chinese cultural heritage, particularly for those who are descendants of mainland refugees that were relocated from their home towns; came under colonial rule, and do not have a lineage hall to trace their

ancestry. The need to reaffirm their Chinese ancestry comes about when Hong Kong returns to Chinese sovereignty. While the purpose of building the Hammer Hill Road Garden is simply to pay tribute to the theme of the monastery, the late 20th century buildings when built in a style interpreted by the designers as Tang Dynasty Buddhist monastic style reaffirms the common cultural heritage of Hong Kong Chinese and those in China.

Zhao Guanghui has suggested that the reason why Buddhist temples are always built on scenic sites is because the view can attract tourists and patrons to the temple. This may be rather cynical, as one can image that an aesthetic environment could also provide spiritual consolation and inspiration to the monks or nuns. But why is it important for a religious recluse to have the scenery to compliment the monastery? The point is Chi Lin Nunnery is no longer a remote religious institution it was when it was founded in 1934. The population boom of Hong Kong has spread to their locality. Chi Lin did not choose to move away. It was their choice to remain where they were because they wanted to be part of the community. Let us now go through the services Chi Lin offers.

The Software – Services offered

Chi Lin runs a very good ‘Care and Attention Home for the Elderly’; there is a

waiting list for people who want to enter the home. They have a clinic on site with volunteer doctors serving the patients. There are now over 400 elderly staying in the home, a few of them are nuns of the Nunnery. Although there are 60 to 70 nuns in the nunnery, about 40 to 50 of them are in their 80's and 90's. They also run a skill opportunity school (S.O.S.) for socially handicapped children, a kindergarten in Lam Tin, a new primary school in Tseng Kwan O, and a Philosophy/Buddhism Cultural Center which has over 1,000 students. The Cultural Center includes the Elementary Buddhist classes that Chi Lin runs every Sunday morning free of charge and the evening school. The Evening School was established in 1998, it runs two certificate programs, each of which lasts for four years, one on philosophy and another on Buddhist Studies as post-secondary school education.

I attended an opening ceremony of their Cultural Center in 2003, held on the 2nd floor hall of Chi Lin's Administration building; the place was quite full. From my experience of the Sunday Elementary Buddhist class which has a capacity of 400 students, there must have been around 500 attendees in the hall. The Chi Lin School Song by Alan Tam was played and the lady at my side was singing along with the lyrics provided to us as we entered. The spirit was surprisingly high. I recognized the recording as the same one played in the primary school and kindergarten graduation ceremonies I attended

earlier that summer. Soon the principal Mr. Leung spoke. Apparently, this was the first Evening School opening ceremony of Chi Lin Cultural Center after seven years in operation. He described how he was the one-man-band in those early days, doing everything. Even advertisements in newspapers were done in rather haphazard manner back then. The Evening School was registered as a 'Post-Secondary' institution. Although the institution does offer 4 year programs, it also offers one-off courses.

After Mr. Leung, Rev. Wan Fan, whom everyone called the 'Master', (the Master of Rev. Z I mentioned earlier) spoke to the students. According to the 'Master', Chi Lin has 70 years of history on the same site. The nunnery was associated with works on religion and education in its history. She wished to continue this tradition. In the 1980's, 'by karma' [words of the Master]; Chi Lin was able to find the right group of teachers to start the Cultural Center. The library was the base of Chi Lin's cultural work, having already had 10 years of collecting art, Buddhism and philosophy books. The Cultural Center was established and the arrival of Mr. Leung as School Principal allowed the development of the tertiary programs [in fact, many of the teachers were introduced by the principal as old friends].

Rev. Wan Fan continued,

There was a momentum within the Chi Lin teachers and principal that allowed

this development along with the Chi Lin objectives. Even during the redevelopment of the Nunnery, there was no stoppage of the Cultural Center. The Board of Director and the teachers, allowed it to continue in the development of the awareness of Chinese, Buddhist, Western and other teachings about life. Regardless of the disciplines, all contributed to humanity. Chi Lin is an open space.

This speech underlined the sense of mission felt by the nuns. They basically view the involvement of teaching as a continuation of the founders' visions.

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that the original intent for the founding of Chi Lin Nunnery was to train Buddhist nuns. It was not meant to be a place for the recluse in the sense that the sangha were not mainly interested to discipline themselves on their own to enter Nirvana. They are of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle tradition. My informant nun told me that according to Buddhist terminology, they perceive that their followers are from the "woods from ten sides", 十方叢林. They are divided to "male populace woods from ten sides" and "female populace woods from ten sides". The male and female populace are further divided between the ordained (monks and nuns) and the lay followers, which they refer as the *four varga* 四眾 and according to her, there is no distinction in Buddhism amongst them. Even Christians are welcome to join the Chi Lin

Nunnery. This is in fact, the principle of the Pureland Sect. The principle of the Chi Lin organization is that all are welcome. All the teaching effort the nunnery is making is in fact consistent with the history of the institution.

The Designer and her Team

Let us recap the sequence of events in the first section of this chapter: the Master of my informant, Rev. Wan Fan, went to China during the 70's, at a time when the Cultural Revolution had just ended. The Master displayed an artistic talent in photography as demonstrated by the fact that the quality of the photographs she took was good enough to warrant later publication, with the cooperation of the Chinese government. Actually Rev. Wan Fan is not the abbottess of Chi Lin (the elderly Rev. Sui Yung is), but Rev. Wan Fan is obviously in charge. Another informant, Jackie, claimed to know the cousin of Rev. Wan Fan:

Chi Lin's head is the cousin 堂妹 of my old school mate. She [the school mate] said, "I've met her and her whole family. Her whole family has a lot of wisdom 慧根 [i.e. Good karma with Buddha], the whole family became sangha". Wan Fan is from Hong Kong, her brother and father both became Buddhist monks. I can't even remember her name [i.e. before her tonsure]. Her scholastic achievement was so-so only, but was very into Buddhism. She may be very talented now, but her cousin said Wan Fan

was not very bright when she was young. Never thought she can be so intelligent. Really! I think Buddha granted her the inspiration to do all these things. Each item [in Chi Lin] was blended in and well thought out.”

Rev. Wan Fan is the designer of the new Chi Lin Nunnery and the Hammer Hill Road Garden. Her followers say that she is a low key person. She was the Art Director for the construction of the Big Buddha, and one of my informants told me that it was Rev. Wan Fan that drew the face of the Big Buddha for it to be cast. As mentioned, many of my informants who are affiliated with Chi Lin referred to her as “The Master”. As yet there is no report of her granting anyone an interview even though I have had the opportunity to talk with her. A quick witted person with a sharp sense of humor, she has conducted many public talks and holds regular talks on Buddhism in Chi Lin every Saturday evening. She is very popular and is well respected by her followers. She speaks of her personal experiences in the Saturday evening talks she gives to her followers: I once heard her gave a very humorous presentation about how she was assigned the job of sweeping the garbage from the shanty town up the hill that continuously flowed down to the front door of her temple. Through the humor of her story, she could engage the audience’s attention while she conveys Buddhist teaching through it.

Nunhood is a choice for asceticism, a choice to abstain from the ties of this world. Yet, the nuns that I met in Chi Lin Nunnery are very busy and actively involved with the

elderly home, the schools, kindergarten and the construction of the Hammer Hill Road Garden. It is a spiritual family and I have the feeling that the nunnery is run like a family firm. When I witnessed the ground breaking ceremony of the Hammer Hill Road Garden, it was not the Master that led the ceremony. The ceremony was conducted by a group of monks, followed by the elderly Rev. Sui Yung whom I mentioned is the abbottess of the Nunnery, it was my nun informant that was directing the event while her master, Rev. Wan Fan was following Rev. Sui Yung.

There seems to be no question that nuns hold a lesser position than monks in Buddhism. I attended many religious ceremonies in Chi Lin that were conducted by monks from China. I was told that there are some ceremonies that nuns are not allowed to perform. Buddhist nuns are subject to a lot more precepts restricting them than Buddhist monks. Lim Teong Aik noted in his glossary that, according to the Pali text, "Every woman who wished to follow His [Buddha's] Discipline must show respect to any BHIKKHU (Lim's capital) [Buddhist monk] no matter how lately he has come into the Order or how long she may have been in the Order", similarly the Sanskrit text stated "Even though a hundred years old, a nun must pay respect to a monk, however young he may be, and offer her seat to him" (Lim 2001: 10-11).

The issue to be considered is that the Chi Lin nuns, with their economic

independence, are able to raise their social position in secular Hong Kong, even if their position in the religion's framework is limited. In addition, legal institutions allow Chi Lin to maintain independence. Being a Hong Kong registered limited non-profit company; the nunnery by law is answerable to the Board of Directors, which is composed of senior Chi Lin nuns and lay followers. In other words, Hong Kong Company Law protects the Chi Lin nuns from any interference from monks of other Buddhist institutions when it comes to the running of the nunnery.

According to my nun informant, originally, the architect suggested the site be sold and the nunnery be rebuilt elsewhere. The nuns' response was that the site does not belong to them, it was just by fate that they had the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction on the nunnery, and they did not see the justification to sell off the site that was left by their spiritual ancestors. If the temple could be in the middle of a city, facilitating people to visit, they believed that to be good karma.

The significance of this is the expressed respect for their spiritual ancestors who are none other than Ven. Wai Um, 葦庵法師, with his teacher, Ven. Gok Yat 覺一法師. In fact, during the ground breaking ceremony, there was a plaque denoting the ancestors of the nunnery to which I saw all the nuns present paid their respects by taking their turns in bowing to the plaque. I would say that this is also one of the reasons why Rev. Wan Fan

is personally low key. She is representing her spiritual family and therefore should be expected to work within the spiritual family structure. There are significant difference between the founder and a leader of a spiritual family. Ven. Zhengyan of Ciji is that the founder and is at the top of the first generation of that spiritual family hierarchy. On the other hand, a leader of a spiritual family such as Chi Lin could be a member of the third or fourth generation of a family; according to Confucianism, there is an order between elder and younger generation. If a person is a member of a younger generation, he or she can never override members of the elder generation; otherwise the person will be guilty of arrogance. Even though Rev. Wan Fan proved to be very capable, she still has to respect the spiritual family's structure. She is still not the abbottess. To subject herself to lime lights would over shadow the existing head of the family, the abbottess.

The Hong Kong government's announcement of the redevelopment of Diamond Hill was a trying moment for the Nunnery's occupants. Rev. Wan Fan rose to the occasion with the determination to carry it through to make the ideal setting for the spiritual family. Even to the point that it involves them in the development of the adjacent garden as well. This is my explanation of why the Nunnery is so involved with the development of the Hammer Hill Road Garden.

Rev. Wan Fan has some very able tonsured disciples. They are very energetic and

very busy. When I first met Rev. Z, she had three phones in front of her that took turns to interrupt our conversation. I met a few who speak fluent English. There were rumors that some of them are ex-government officials and former executives of a major local conglomerate such as Jardines and Hong Kong Bank. But I was not able to verify this except for one, who was not Rev. Z. The other nun I talked with told me that she graduated from Hong Kong University and once wanted to be a Catholic, but she opted for Buddhist nunhood. In addition to these well educated nuns, Chi Lin has some lay members volunteers in the nunnery who are also very well educated. One of them is Rachel. She was a Buddhist even before she was involved with Chi Lin. She told me how she was recruited.

I would go to Buddhist Halls, but I didn't come here [Chi Lin] because it's too far away. I lived on the Hong Kong side. It was surround by huts and sheds then [before the redevelopment of the Nunnery], you would not have heard of Chi Lin. There was a friend who said that there's an interesting nun who does lots of things. I had time and so I came. I saw the Master with lots of layouts on the desk. It was a very big desk with lots of layouts and plans, that's my first image of her. I didn't know her then, and we sat and talked, I asked a few question and didn't have any impression. After a few months, someone was looking for me; all of a sudden a well known person called me by the phone and introduced

herself to me. I didn't recognize her, and it was all by indirect chain [of introduction]. The Master wanted to have someone to help her, but she did not know [how to contact] me, only that someone brought someone there to meet her. I said I don't know how to do it. I know a different level of things. So this person said I should meet the Master [again]. After I arrived, we sat by the table, the Master came and started to assign things to me, and I was rather silly and dare not say no. From then on I just helped for all these years and became the PR person for the Big Buddha.

Rachel, the PR professional, then became one of the key volunteer workers of Chi Lin. She helped in the publicity of the Big Buddha, the redevelopment project of Chi Lin Nunnery, and the ground breaking ceremony of the Hammer Hill Road Garden.

Perhaps the skill of Rev. Wan Fan and her disciples can best be illustrated by Flora, a partner of a well established local law firm and a lay disciple of Rev. Wan Fan. Flora told me how Rev. Z, asked her to help in reviewing a legal contract:

There are images that Buddhism is very backward. People think that Buddhism is of the level of an old lady beating the petty person 打小人. We have to raise the standard. So if there is anything I can do and it's something I specialize in, of course I will do it. ... I may be less serious about other clients' matter, but not Chi Lin's things. Actually I have a wish that one day I will be able to dedicate more time to Chi Lin. I hope when I

retire I will be able to spend more time with them. It's like in the Diamond Sutra, there is no differentiating heart; there is no differentiation of 'you' and 'me'. There is no giver and receiver. If you think that you have given, and keep that in heart, then the merit is small. Rev. Z gave me a fright, it was a Saturday, after the talk, she spent two days to learn and she went through the points [of the contract]. When we talked with the other party I thought it would be me doing the talking; then I found out that she just went through 100% of the points, it scared me that she could go through it page by page, point by point. She is very intelligent. I have talked with another friend; she said if you have had a board meeting with Chi Lin, you can handle any major meetings. They are sharp and grab the points very quickly. It's frightening. I did not expect her [Rev. Z] to have such commercial sense. Two of the points she raised initially did not seem to me to be important, but on second thought, I agreed with her. Such a small thing can show so much, if the student is like that, what of the master? Of course, Rev. Z is very special. Her level of English is very high.

What Flora said illustrates how the nuns of the nunnery are impressively intelligent and are able to capture the dedication of their lay followers. It also reflects the fact that the management skills of the nuns are up to the modern international standard. The important thing is that the nuns of Chi Lin know how to retain very high skilled volunteers. A retired high level civil servant, Charlotte goes to Chi Lin twice a week for volunteer work. She hopes to organize Chi Lin's volunteer team better. Daisy, a factory

manager, hopes to organize Chi Lin's production team better. Wendy, a senior civil servant, is helping with Chi Lin's protocol in big events. Whether it was by Chi Lin's own selection or by the volunteers' self-selection, Chi Lin is upgrading the management of their volunteer team with executives and professional volunteers.

What do the outsiders think?

Even though the garden is yet to be constructed, the number of visitors to the nunnery is very high. On Sundays, when I attend their Sunday Elementary Buddhism Class, tourists come in by the bus load. The Chairman of the Wong Tai Sin District Board was reported in the newspaper as being enthusiastic about the construction of the garden as an enhancement of an existing tourist attraction – the Chi Lin Nunnery itself. To be a tourist attraction inevitably secularizes the nunnery. But if we interpret secularization as being involved with worldly affairs rather than spiritual affairs, the nunnery has always been secularized to the extent that it has always been involved with social service work. In effect, Chi Lin is doing what the Ven. Taixu of China advocated in the first half of the twentieth century and what I quoted Ven. Xingyun in the last chapter as saying Buddhism should be. Chi Lin is doing its part to be of significance to Hong Kong society so that it can be accepted by the Hong Kong SAR.

On the other hand, being a tourist icon and being described on the web site of the Hong Kong Tourism Board as a 'must-see' tourist spot was probably not what Rev. Wan Fan had in mind when she designed the monastery. In fact, there have been reports of arguments between tourists who insisted on taking photographs of the statues in the monastery and the security guards of the nunnery who prohibited them from doing so. Indeed, from the point of view of the nunnery, the statues represent the beings they honor. Even though the nun I interviewed declared that the monastery is a public place, in effect it is not. The monastery is the spiritual family estate of the nunnery, not to mention the private residence of the nuns.

Summary

Before the redevelopment of the nunnery, not many people had heard of it. The most famous nunnery in Hong Kong before that was Tung Lin Gok Yuen 東蓮覺苑 in Happy Valley. But now, with its redeveloped Monastery Complex, Chi Lin's image has become more prominent. Chi Lin Nunnery's visibility is due to the aesthetic appeal of the redeveloped complex, and its association with popular culture. Whether it can continue to build on to this image through the construction of the new Hammer Hill Road Park remains to be seen. As well as being an attractive complex, the Nunnery is also

contributing to the modernization of Buddhism in Hong Kong through its educational institution; a unique response which compliments the modernized Buddhism introduced by the Taiwanese Buddhists Organizations. This seems to be the way in which Chi Lin can tackle the challenge of Taiwanese Buddhists Organization's encroachment in the competition for the affiliation of Hong Kong Buddhists which no other Buddhist institution in Hong Kong seems to be able to do.

In her speech at the opening ceremony of the Evening School, Rev. Wan Fan mentioned the 'competition' from globalization that Chi Lin has encountered. My nun informant took pride in telling me that Chi Lin has the largest and most complete collection of Buddhist books. They present themselves as stewards of Buddhist culture in Hong Kong. On the other hand, they were not able to raise their profile until the redevelopment project's fund raising effort. What the TBOs started in the 80's was a regeneration of interest in Buddhism at the intellectual level. The younger generation of Buddhists is not looking for ways to Nirvana; not yet anyway. They want Buddhism to be of significance to society. They want Buddhism to be of higher profile with a more modern image. The TBOs were able to do that while the Hong Kong Buddhist Association gives an impression of 'Old Monk's Clubs' (as mentioned by John Shannon); and the Po Lin Monastery is associated with 'the ferocious monk' who is involved with

politics. The Chi Lin Nunnery is able to 'compete' with the TBOs by breaking away from the traditional image, by symbolically breaking away from the gold and red paint design of the traditional Chinese temples in constructing a completely wooden temple, by involvement with popular and high cultures, by standing out as something that the Hongkongers want visitors to identify us with and by being a icon.

Chapter 4: The Proselytes

Why Buddhism?

In the first chapter of this thesis, I mentioned four high visibility events involving the Buddhists. Confucian and Daoist institutions just did not have any comparable activities to project their image to the Hong Kong public. But the events themselves should only be the symbols of Buddhism revival⁷ that heighten the religion's visibility. I asked my informants if they thing Buddhism is a Chinese religion? One of my informants, Beverly said,

There are a lot of Chinese [people] believing [in Buddhism], that's the truth. Other non-Chinese people would be less. Doesn't that make it a Chinese religion? I think it should be, because there are more Chinese that understand this doctrine. It is more difficult for non-Chinese people to understand it. Things such as 'follow harmony' or karma are more difficult for non-Chinese to understand.

While this may be ethnocentric, it is a view shared by a 23 year old Buddhist Zara; she said,

Religion is mixed with cultures. Because there are continuous changes, e.g.

⁷ When I mentioned the words "Buddhism revival" to Rev. Wan Fan, I was met with an indignant reply to the nature that "Buddhism has never had a down turn".

there is the Sutra of Mother and Father, you don't have it in India, it's there only because the Chinese themselves wrote it. You don't have it in the Tibetan Transmission. I feel that Buddhism is a Chinese religion. There may be Buddhists overseas, but they [the non-Chinese believers] stress on meditation, mainly Theravada. Chinese are not [of] the same sect. Chinese have more people believing in the Greater Vehicle Buddhism.

This is not the expressed vocal view of the majority of my informants; only three out of the forty informants say that Buddhism is a Chinese religion. Yet Buddhist influence in Chinese culture is very evident. Buddhism was transmitted to China for over a few thousands years. It is well accepted that the religion has both acculturated and assimilated to the form of Han Transmission Buddhism. It became difficult to distinguish the non-Chinese element of the religion to most followers. Han Transmission Buddhism is a branch of Buddhism that was Sinicized mainly because Buddhism, or any other institutional religion in China for that matter, was very much under the control of the imperial palace. According to Yang, "Until the end of the Ch'ing [Qing] dynasty, religious administration was a part of the function of the *li pu*, the Board of Rites, which was one of the six boards of the central administration in the national government" (Yang 1991: 187). In fact, even now, in the People's Republic of China, the central government still exercises control over religious matters. The Buddhism that many Hong Kong people

are familiar with is Han Transmission Buddhism that includes the values of other Chinese belief systems, such as Confucianism and Daoism.

Some of my other informants share the idea that the influence of Buddhism in Chinese literature throughout history is very substantial. One of them is a retired Secondary School teacher who taught Chinese, Abby. She said,

The Chinese word for ‘a split second’ 一刹那, is translated from Sanskrit, we borrowed that from them, we benefit a lot. Frankly, Chinese Culture benefited from Buddhism, such as Tang Poetry, without the level of [understanding of] Buddhist Chan (Zen), we can not understand Chinese Literature. When I taught Chinese Literature in Form 6 and 7, I had to use the Buddhist’s saying on how to capture the inspiration of that ‘split second’. It is the Buddhist’s ‘unintentional wonderment’ 無心而妙, i.e. One is not looking for it, and it is unintentional. It is ‘looking for Spring but can’t find Spring, you look so hard that your shoes are worn out but it’s just over the door ledge in front of you’ 到處尋春不見春, 望鞋踏破領頭門, etc., so the Tang Poetry brings up the Buddhist level [of Chinese literature]. One needs to use Buddhist’s spirituality in order to ‘explain through’ 解通 the idea, otherwise you can only say it’s good, but you have to explain the idea through. You can’t score marks at “A” level if you just say the poetry is good, you need to explain through the idea behind the poetry.

Originally, I started this research assuming that one of the reasons why there was an increase in self-declared Buddhists in Hong Kong was related to the return to Chinese

sovereignty of Hong Kong and the revival of Chinese cultural awareness, but I found out that most of my informants can discern Buddhism as not being a Chinese religion, only the few informants whom I mentioned earlier. Naomi gave her explanation,

You can say Buddhism is a Chinese religion. The Indian Buddhism no longer exists. Now we get to know Buddhism more on Chinese land [Writer's note: I presume where Chinese reside]. Also, China is the largest place where you can find Buddhists. You [would] find mostly Chinese to believe in [Buddhism]. You find it [Buddhism] in Sri Lanka, or Thailand, but these places are small and so are the populations as compared to China's. Throughout the world, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, they all believe in Buddhism. It's not just Chinese but more Asian religion.

Why is it that the majority of my informants considered Buddhism as not just a Chinese religion? This is because of the global awareness of the 21st Century Hongkongers. To consider Buddhism as a Chinese religion would deny objective historical knowledge in favor of subjective cultural sentiment, and most informants chose the more rational objective knowledge answer. Beverly and Zara are the only two of my forty informants that would say that Buddhism could be Chinese, and Naomi shifted her later in the conversation to include the other Asian countries. This is perhaps even the Central Government may have missed the boat: The Chineseness in Sinicized Buddhism does not necessarily cause Buddhists in Hong Kong to relate more to China through their

beliefs.

But the question still to be answered is: What is the reason that caused the number of Buddhists to grow in Hong Kong as reviewed in Cheng and Wong's 1995 survey mentioned on pages 4 and 5 of this thesis?

Conversion to Buddhism

While the majority of my informants had religious training in Catholicism and Protestantism in their schools or Sunday schools, many of them were not converted to Christianity. At the same time, the majority of these people are from families that had elder members that practiced folk religion. These informants were actively involved in the worshipping rituals of folk religion led by their family elders when they themselves were in their childhood. The conversion history of these self-declared Buddhists are in one way or another influenced by one of the greatest Buddhist teacher from Taiwan, Ven. Xingyun of Fo Guang Shan.

While the majority of my informants are in their 40's and 50's, according to an informant who was a Chan (Zen) instructor at the Chi Lin Nunnery Cultural Center, the students of his classes are usually 'younger' in their 30's and 40's. The 'younger' ones are taking an active role in learning more about Buddhism, take an active role; whereas the

elderly retirees are mainly interested in rituals and talks, i.e. take a more passive role. This informant perceived that, during the mid-80's, local Buddhist institutions moved towards 'the better side, moving towards quality', i.e., moving towards zhengxin. He said,

There were some other activities outside [Referring to other Buddhism teaching institutions]. [But] the trend is towards zhengxin. Rituals are mainly for [the] older [ones] seeking blessings. The younger people are taking these [zhengxin] up. Chinese usually take up the work, responsibility, duty and ideology of the previous generation, but nowadays, the younger ones are moving towards zhengxin and meanings of life.

The Taiwanese Buddhist Halls [he did not give specifics], whom he described as not very big in activities, now and then have 'major masters' coming here to teach. He said, "After the masters leave, the fellow students will gather together for self-study." The Book Fair is held annually in Hong Kong every summer. It is one of the venues to purchase reading materials for potential Buddhists and making contact with local Buddhist organizations. The stands that sold Buddhists books were almost as large as those for Christian books in the fair I attended in the summer of 2003. All the TBOs have a book stand there.

According to Baumeister, "...people are usually recruited into religious groups on

the basis of friendship or some other relationship with a group member.... People join and leave religious groups because of the people and relationships, rather than because of belief in particular doctrines.... it is mainly the social ties that move people in and out of religious groups” (Baumeister 1991: 186). In the modern Hong Kong society that changes so rapidly, I found that many of my informants are converted from one religion group to the other based on their social situation at the time when they need to look for something to believe in. The histories of how different informants in the following sections converted from one religion to another demonstrated this.

From Folk Religion to Buddhism

Most of my informants are converted from other beliefs to Buddhism. Camilla was a member of the Tian Dao Hui 天道會 [an alternate name for Yiguan Dao 一貫道], which is a vegetarian sect from Taiwan. She had a most unusual entrance experience. Camilla is from a very poor family; her father was a street hawker who sold cooked pig's intestines. She only had primary school education in a roof top school of a Housing Estate, but tried to continue her secondary school education through evening classes. She worked as a cleaner in 1987 and one of her colleagues took her to the Tian Dao Hui. On the first day, she was, in her own words, ‘coerced’ into joining the association. She said:

By the time we got there [I found out that] it was Tian Dao 天道 Then they said there would be a ceremony, and wanted me to participate and asked me to put my name in, which I did. They have a *diandao* 點道 ceremony which represents the passing of the teaching to a person. I said I never agreed, but then they say, I've put my name in. I thought to myself: I never really wanted to join their hall; on the other hand I never wanted to argue, so it was with reluctance that I participated. The whole place was filled with old ladies, their sect usually first asked people to join and later convert the person to vegetarian, when they knew that I am vegetarian, they thought that I was the right person to join, as many who joined for years won't be vegetarian. ...

Her original intention was to go through the induction process so as to get herself out of the situation. She had not intended return to Tian Dao; but return she did and even got some of her friends trapped into the same predicament. Here is how it happened: After the ceremony, Camilla felt that perhaps she could learn some sutras from Tian Dao. Some of her friends who found out that she was listening to sutra wanted to join her. Because Camilla had sworn to secrecy about the ceremony, she felt that she couldn't tell her friends that she was coerced into joining. As a result, her friends joined the Association in similar manner. But her friends are not as timid as Camilla, and they had no qualms about breaking the oath of loyalty to Tian Dao they made during the dian dao ceremony and participated in other Buddhist activities.

It was from these friends that she found out that they have ‘sneakily’ read Ven. Xingyun’s book. Why ‘sneakily’? Because as Tian Dao Hui members, they were only allow to read the Tian Dao scriptures. One member convinced Camilla to go and listen to Ven. Xingyun in one of the Venerable’s talks conducted that year in Hong Kong: ‘in a small place of only 400 people’. This has to be during the earlier days of Ven. Xingyun’s trips to Hong Kong because at later periods he conducts his talks in the Hong Kong Coliseum with 40,000 seating capacity.

After Ven. Xingyun left Hong Kong, they went seeking for another Buddhist master; they found a lay teacher first but later found out that this lay teacher had a Taiwanese monk as master. This Taiwanese monk, Master A, belongs to a monastery under the Japanese Mantra Sect which is known as the Shingon Sect in Japan. They went to Taiwan with the master to visit the sect’s monasteries. Many took refuge again with this Japanese Mi sect, and their involvement with Buddhism grew from this point. One of Camilla’s friends, Emily detailed how they come to build a new Buddhist hall:

At that time we were still quite ignorant. After taking refuge with the Mi sect, there were many ‘faat’ 法 and ‘wuh mo’ 護魔 [magic] performed. I heard a lot of stories. Someone was in the final stage of liver cancer, and Master A did the ‘wuh mo’ for her. I heard from the person involved that when they performed the ritual she had a burning sensation on the side of

her body that was affected. ... After doing the 'wuh mo' ritual three times, she entered the hospital for a check up, and was told that she was healed. I heard a lot of things like this. For example, there was one who could not conceive, but after asking the master to help her, she conceived. Some were even more magical. One had a pregnancy outside of the uterus, and the master could help her to make it a normal pregnancy. ... We thought it was really magical. But at that time it was not the Master A that performed these 'faat', it was the senior students 'si hing' 師兄. I remember at that time the Buddhist Hall was in Causeway Bay, and there were all these 'si hing' that came from Taiwan to perform 'faat', my current Master (master B) is one of them.

Before he was ordained, Master B was very good at Chinese Astrology 紫微斗 [ji meih dau]; he has some powers that can scare you. He could say something straight to the point and there is no escape from him. ... It could be karma, even though he left our refuge master (Master A), whenever he (Master B) came to Hong Kong we would take care of him. Slowly, he started his own branch. Perhaps we knew him well and also we felt that he could teach us a lot, we took care of him and helped him. There was no fixed place, so we would rent a place for him or lend some place for him to stay.

Soon they worked on starting a Buddhist hall. Emily went on to say,

At that time, every time Master B came over, we had a group of people with common interests who would talk and listen to his teaching. It was

mainly philosophy of life. Then, after a few years, there were other friends who are also of the Mi sect, which is a rather mysterious Buddhist sect. These friends had some wishes: Sometimes they would have a business problem, and they would request us to ask this master to come over to Hong Kong. We would do it sometimes. Some even had supernatural trouble. He would come here ever so often. Each time he came over it was for handling some problem. In the end, by chance, our group established this Buddhist Hall. Since we had this Buddhist Hall, we held another take refuge ceremony and became his disciples. He is still of the Mi sect.

This was a few years ago. They helped Master B to build the Buddhist Hall here in Hong Kong. Camilla could only bring herself to take refuge under the Three Treasures after Master B became the abbot of the new Buddhist Hall. He convinced her that it is safe to do so. Other than telling me how they set up a Buddhist hall, the above stories also illustrate that Buddhists in Hong Kong do not think much about “taking refuge” more than once. Emily took refuge three times, by Ven. Xingyun, by Master A and then by Master B, not to mention the dian dao 點道 ceremony of Tian Dao.

The above story showed how collectively one group of people seeking further knowledge in Buddhism after listening to Ven. Xingyun’s teaching, ended up in helping to build a Buddhist Hall. Of course, not every group of people, after listening to Xingyun, set up new Buddhist halls like this, some would get involved in Ven. Xingyun’s Fo Xiang

(Faht Heung) Buddhist Hall 佛香講堂 here in Hong Kong. There are many who came to know Buddhism through introduction of friends and listening to Ven. Xingyun. Ven. Xingyun seems to have no problem in performing the ritual of 'taking refuge' on new converts who signed up during his talk. But there are some sangha who would not perform the 'take refuge' ritual unless the convert has someone close who is a Buddhist already.

Olivia told me her experience,

I took refuge in *Guan Yin Si* 觀音寺, Lantau, it was 1998, at that point in time it was quite unplanned. ... That was a period when I was in the middle of my divorce process. I was divorced in 2000. But it's not just this reason. I was searching all the time, sometimes it was more intensive, sometimes it was less, depending on the circumstances. But that was a very coincidental opportunity, it was not planned, nor was it impulsive, it was with a group of friends, [work mates], I read a lot of Buddhist books, not very deeply. ... There was a group of us. One of the colleagues suggested that, 'Mr. M, please take us to a place where we can stay over night.' It was in *Guan Yin Si*, which usually does not open for people to stay over night unless you are their disciple. Mr. M said 'OK' so we all went together. But on the ship to Lantau I met my mother, she was going with some of her friends to Mui Wo; my colleagues know my mother, and all of a sudden this Mi Sect friend said to my mother, 'If Master Y [the

supervisor of *Guan Yin Si*] agrees, let's get Olivia to take refuge.' My mother was very happy, and in my heart I thought it was OK, after all, it's a new stage in life. In the end I did take refuge.

In fact, Master Y would only perform the take refuge ceremony on Olivia after her mother came to the temple. Olivia is convinced that had her mother not come to *Guan Yin Si* that day, Master Y would not have performed the take refuge ceremony because he was concerned that there would not be anyone to help Olivia develop her religiosity.

Some come to know of Buddhism through Sunday newspapers. Naomi's father is an atheist, but her mother is from San Tin, New Territories. She had the opportunity to know about folk religion through her mother, but also attended Protestant primary and secondary schools. The schools were affiliated with the Salvation Army and she was in the school choir. She said her best friends were devout Protestants and that she did feel the urge to be a Christian in her youth, but her father objected. She felt she became a Buddhist probably because of the influence of her mother's family. She has very fond memories of her maternal grandparents and cherishes her relatives. She loved the water buffalo of her grandfather so much that after it was killed she could no longer eat beef. She recognizes that her relatives are folk religious and may not be very 'rational' in their worshiping. She said,

Many of them are irrational beliefs. Everything has to be worshiped. We

have to worship a tree, being told that there is a spirit there. I didn't understand very much, I just asked why there were so many incense pots under the tree. They would tell me, 'Don't talk rubbish,' and all that. How could I know? So things [in my mother's village] were very interesting to me, there was religion plus the folk culture. I would follow my maternal grandpa every where, even to the Ancestral Hall [even though she, as a girl, was not supposed to go there].

Her coming to know Buddhism happened when she started to read the newspaper column on Buddhism from the age of twelve. She said, "My family subscribed to the Industry and Commercial Daily 工商日報; it had a section that talked about Buddhism. I liked that a lot. In fact I read it since I was 12. I don't know what attracted me [to Buddhism], I think it's inborn." In Naomi's case, her childhood experiences probably drew her towards Buddhism. Her selection of zhengxin Buddhism would overcome her feeling of "irrational" folk beliefs took up by her maternal parents. She has been attending Buddhist class in Chi Lin Nunnery for the two years that I have known her.

From Christianity to Buddhism

Social influence on a person selection of beliefs is not confined to a specific religion. As I mentioned, most of my informants are from families that practiced folk religion at home. At the same time, eight were baptized as Catholic during their formative years,

under the influence of religious teaching when they were in their primary schools, between 6 and 11 years old, and secondary schools, between 12 and 17. Many cited that the urge of wanting to identify with the authority, in their cases, the school teachers and the nuns or priests, was their motive for seeking baptism.

Many school children are anxious to be accepted by or identified with their peers and particularly their teachers. Yvonne was baptized after attending Catholic Primary school. She said,

There was no pressure, but if you wanted to be close to the sisters, if you were Catholic, then you would be 'class 1'; if not, you were a bit distant. There was that inclination. I felt slightly that if one has religion, one is cleaner and purer. I liked the lace head veil they worn to symbolize that they are 'holier'⁸. In my heart, I really wanted to join. The image is that of purity. I was baptized because I like the lace head veil and I would be closer to the nuns as a Catholic. I don't have any problem attending Mass even now [because she is now a Buddhist].

Yvonne's wedding with her first husband was in a Catholic Church, even though he was a Buddhist from Thailand. After she was married, Yvonne went with her husband to Thailand. She took with her all her Catholic Rosaries, lace and Holy Pictures. She continued:

⁸ In fact the lace head veil is a symbol of modesty of not showing bare head to God who is looking down from Heaven, not a symbol of 'holier than thou'.

I was very devout when I was young, yes, before I left for Thailand I bought these beautiful rosaries, holy pictures, all the things that I could not buy when I was at school. It was like bringing my dowry with me there.

Soon she came to have contact with Buddhism:

My husband's mother loved me very much, it's not that she was trying to convert me, she had some relatives who were ordained Buddhist monks, and she was showing me off because she only had one son, so she was showing me to the uncles and the elders of the family. They were monks, so of course I had to go to temples. Then I started to have conversations with them, they were meaningful conversations... I felt that they were very cultured, when one has interest, one would go more often. That's how it got started. When I talked with the Buddhist monks, I told them that I was not belittling them. I asked because I wanted to get it clear. ...To all my questions, they had answers.

Yvonne found that she was convinced by the monks' arguments. Soon she found that her beliefs became inclined towards Buddhism. Knowing that she had some very beautiful Catholic religious paraphernalia, she decided to donate them to a Catholic Church:

I found that my heart seemed to lean towards them [Buddhism], so I went to the Catholic Church in Thailand, very sincerely I gave these beautiful things to the priest. ... I thought perhaps [the priest] would see who ... I

can give these to them. But he scolded me hard. It was so embarrassing. He said 'You've turned your back away from Jesus, you've committed a mortal sin, don't think you can get away by putting these things down.' I was very sad, I said, 'God gave me a brain, I'm not saying that I'm right for sure, but You [God] give me thought, allow me to think, it is only at this point in time that I would take this path, perhaps I will come back, why would you be so firm about it, I was just thinking that these are such good things, if there is another person that would like them, isn't it better to [let them] keep these? It's not that I belittle you [Catholics], but You (God) have given me a brain. I am trying this and that. How else do I know you are the best?

That was the last time I went to church, because they made me very sad. He [the priest] kept on saying that I was a mortal sinner; I felt he was very narrow-[minded]. In the end, it cut me off. I never view other religions with colored eye glasses (i.e. judge with prejudice), but I was no longer interested [in Catholicism].

In Yvonne's case, she was attracted by the social position of Catholics when she was at school. After she went to Thailand, she was able to come into contact her husband's family elders who impressed her as very cultured and could answer many of her queries. Again, the love of her ex-mother-in-law and the social position of her Buddhist teachers in her ex-husband's family must play a part in influencing her conversion to Buddhism.

Later, Yvonne's first marriage did not work out and she got divorced and returned to

Hong Kong. When she got married the second time, her husband was a Protestant, but she had a civil ceremony and remains a Buddhist. Even though Yvonne was baptized as a Catholic and attended Catholic school, at the time of the interview she seemed not to realize that Catholicism is a monotheistic religion and is one that is totally exclusive of other deities. In fact, her baptism and other education in Catholicism have proved to be inadequate in providing her with the knowledge that what she did (and what she interpreted as acceptable) was in fact totally unacceptable in the Catholic eyes.

Yvonne's story illustrates that some Catholics, even with the Bible Knowledge class taught in Catholic schools, might not quite fully register the core teaching of the religion. They are from families that are not Catholics, thus they do not have any family cultural reinforcement of the Catholic religion other than from their school contact. Once they are out of the school environment, it becomes relatively easy to accept a different religion's teaching without any guilt. One informant, Ursula, was attracted by Chi Lin's cultural program, even though she admitted that she no longer practice Catholicism. Nonetheless, she was not ready to say that she is interested in Buddhism. Ursula is from a Catholic family who were overseas Chinese that returned from South America. The religion enforced at her home's social cultural is Catholic; that is the explanation why she did not proselytize as easily as the other informants.

The two following cases further illustrate Baumeister's point of how social influence affects one's selection of religions. Two of my informants were converted to Catholicism while they were in school, but after leaving it, could not retain their beliefs of the religion:

Alice became a Catholic when she was in Form 2, i.e., the second year of her secondary school. She would have been around 13 years old. She attended an elite Catholic girl's school even though her father was a Buddhist. She said,

I didn't feel any pressure to become a Catholic, I became a Catholic, perhaps in hindsight now that I have matured, that it was the environment because as a Catholic school the Catholic atmosphere was very heavy, e.g., the nuns would talk about Catholic stories of miracles and how faithful a person should be, so, for that time, I guess because I heard so many stories on miracles from the nuns that I felt that I had to be a Catholic. I believed in those miracles. ... I was twelve or thirteen then. I thought Catholicism was terrific. So I joined. As long as I was at school, the belief was strong. ... When I was at school I could keep it up; I would go to confession; take communion; I would attend mass, because of the opportunity there. The belief and will power was strong. But after I left school and started working, then I didn't do anything (laugh). I stopped attending mass, didn't go to confession.

In fact Alice's interest in religion was rekindled when she emigrated to Australia,

There I met a Malaysian Chinese, her family also just emigrated there, and they had an elderly lady in the family, her mother-in-law. We became good friends... They lived very close, only 2 minutes' drive. Then I found the elderly lady was very at peace with her situation. She believed in Guan Yin. She made no demands, her temperament was good, she was optimistic, She would never argue [which is unusual] particularly since she was a widow bringing up her son [and therefore would usually be more possessive], an only son ...She told me a lot about Buddhism, and I thought, that's true, I think she has given me some small influences.... she taught me how to be a vegetarian, that's keeping the 1st and the 15th day [in a lunar month] as vegetarian day. I started to adhere to it. ...Once they returned to Malaysia and I went to visit them, and by chance I went to visit her Buddhist Hall, there I invited [i.e. bought] a Guan Yin, my Guan Yin is from Malaysia. Then I felt that I became slower. They use to call me a train engine or fire engine. ... I became less obstinate.

Alice never took refuge; she feels that it is just a ceremony, but she recites Buddhist prayers at home.

Similarly, Beverly was baptized as a Catholic when she was in Primary 6, around 10 or 11 years old. Like Alice, she attended a well known Catholic school even though her parents practiced folk religion. She was very active at school; she would stay after school to listen to catechism, joined the Legion of Mary, joined in social activities, and visited elderly homes. For her secondary school, she changed schools, also to a very well known

Catholic girls School, but her religious extra curricular activities stopped except for Sunday mass, she said,

I would still go to Mass on Sunday. It was an outing. At that time you didn't have anything to do on Sunday, so going to Church was an outing. I would go to Mid-Night Mass when I was young. When friends went, I would join them. It gave us an excuse not to sleep. My last day in Church was my wedding day. [She laughed] After that, even though my husband is also Catholic, he is also very lazy, I don't know why, after we got married, we were blaming each other [for not going to church], we kept looking for excuses to go out rather than going to Church. [She laughed again] We were not very devout.

When Beverly emigrated to the US, her husband was also an 'astronaut', similar to Alice's. She had a similar experience as Alice, but less intense. She went on to say,

I didn't take refuge. I'm not that devout. I'm not really sure if I am a Buddhist; I don't burn incense, I don't worship Buddha, but I pray. I pray the Heart Sutra and the Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva [The Treasure Chamber Bodhisattva] Sutra. I learned those from the Buddhist Halls. I try to be a vegetarian on the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month. But I'm not as good as she (Alice) is; if I remember I'll keep it, if not, I won't pressure myself. I also refrain from beef, but like her, I wanted to sacrifice something. Like when my grandchild was born I would sacrifice something for their [mother and child's] safety and refrain from eating beef for a year, and

then there seems to be something each year, so I end up not eating beef most of the time.

Although Alice and Beverly no longer affiliate themselves with Catholicism, they still retain their perception of what religion should be according to what they were taught when they were in Catholic schools. For example, they recognize that praying Buddhist prayers and keeping the ritual of not eating meat affiliate them with Buddhism. To my Sri Lankan teacher in Chi Lin, and to the senior executive of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, these two informants would be mindful of Buddha. But to some extent, they seem to retain their perception of religion from their Catholic training. For some reason, they would not take refuge, probably because they interpret the ritual with higher significance than say, Emily. Even though they did not say it, but I suspect that they have the similar sense of guilt as Abby has, i.e., “It is like getting married twice.”

Rites of Passage with divisions in beliefs

The informants in the above sections obviously have different intensity levels of belief. But there are some commonalities amongst the above proselytes from Folk Religion and Catholicism. When they were young, or comparatively less knowledgeable, they made their commitment to the first religion individually at a comparatively young

age. Except for Ursula, many didn't have a person of close relationship to support the continued practice of the first religion. It's a common phenomenon that parents in Hong Kong, probably because of their disinterest in religion, seem to allow their children to convert to a religious affiliation different from their own. But this 'freedom of religion' within a family does have its problem when rites of passage need to be performed. When the children of a family have different beliefs from their parents, the difference is most vexing during funeral services.

Herbert was baptized a Catholic, joined the church choir and became an altar boy, but his father practiced folk religion and his mother was a Buddhist. He felt that his father purposely 'positioned' him to be a Catholic so that he could enter an elite Catholic school. Now Herbert has stopped practicing Catholicism and would not call himself a Catholic. In fact, he didn't even have a church wedding because he didn't feel that he was a Catholic. He said, "I think Buddhism is becoming more popular to my generation of people who believed in another religion before, as we grow older, we can understand the religion more, so we come to the point that we want to discipline ourselves, and I think Buddhism is the most appropriate religion." Herbert is 50 years old, although he himself tends to lean towards Buddhism, his sisters do not, and they maintain their Christian faith as the following incident demonstrates:

When his mother died, as the only son, Herbert felt the obligation to perform the Chinese filial son's role. His mother's funeral was done in Daoist and Buddhist rituals. In the funeral parlor, being the eldest and only son, he performed all the Daoist rituals out of respect for his mother. His four sisters all came back from the overseas but refused to burn incense. When Herbert knelt, bowed and burned incense, they just stood in silent respect. Herbert knows that from their perspective this was a kind of respect, but he was not happy because they did not respect their mother's preference and made his father very unhappy.

Another case was described by Naomi. It was the funeral of her friend's father-in-law. Her best friend is a Christian, but her father-in-law was not a Christian. She said,

It was only at his death bed that a priest asked him to accept God, the person that was laid there probably didn't know what God is, [just] because his son is a devout Christian. I think it may be a bit too much, he may be a Christian, and his daddy may not be; if he was, he would have been baptized long ago, he forced his father to baptize, and I think he's too much. I didn't know if the person laying there really wanted it that way. I think the son is too authoritarian, even if you are a devout Christian, you can not force your daddy to be one. He (the son) thinks Christianity is the best, but his daddy may not think that way. How can I say it's appropriate or not? One has to consider whether the one inside [the coffin] would have liked it that way. Do you

respect his will? That's most important.

Sabrina was a Catholic. She feels Christianity is good for her children as they would receive good training. When her children were studying overseas, she would tell her children that they have to go to church every week otherwise she'll be angry. She felt this caused her second son to volunteer to help in the church. She later converted to Buddhism and has no problem with her own conversion from Catholicism to Buddhism; she knows that she is seen as an anomaly by her friends, and she is not bothered by that. Even if it is true that her friends' attitudes do not bother her, she may not have considered the effect that she has cultivated her children to be Catholics. Will they respect her religion and hold a Buddhist funeral for her when she passes away?

Julian compared Buddhist funerals with Protestant funerals, which serves as a good reference for the conflict that could arise if the funeral is not performed according to religious affiliation:

Buddhists, according to my knowledge, perform the funeral rituals basically for the deceased; they don't have much for the survivors. The orthodox Buddhism has to keep the altar very quiet, one should not cry. One should not move the body. They are already practicing this in Taiwan. It is for the dead to go to whatever places that he or she is supposed to go. The participants are of secondary importance to the point of not really requiring much. You don't need a lot of people to participate. I don't know

if it is really Protestantism or if they have included the loved ones' preference, but I notice that Protestants have included a detailed outline of the life of the deceased either to praise or commemorate him or her. From the point of view of Buddhism that's not good, because it would cause the deceased to reminisce this life, which is not good for the deceased as he or she will depart in sadness. But my feeling is that Protestantism seems to be taking the opportunity to preach. In a way I think it's a bit too much which I don't like.

The Buddhist funeral is for the purpose of assisting the deceased be en route to reincarnation or nirvana. Christian funeral is for celebration of the life of the deceased, obviously the ritual of another religion could be vexing to true believers.

There is another twist to the rites of passage: Mabel, a devout young Buddhist, wanted the romance and beauty of a church wedding, but since neither one of the young couple were Christian, they resorted to having a church wedding in Las Vegas.

Summary

The fluidity of modern society changes people's social environment a lot quicker than in history. With the rapid change in social environment and acceptance of plurality, modern society's individualism allows people to get away with changes in religious affiliation. When people exercise their idiosyncratic choice of religion at different stages of their life, we can expect conflicts to arise when mismatch comes to light. The incident

Yvonne described with her priest is understandable; any self-respecting Catholic priest would do the same thing. But the reality is, individuals nowadays in Hong Kong, because the society does not have a socially enforced religion, do have the social power to make their own choice of beliefs and as their personal situation change, people change their beliefs. In fact that is why traditional religions have encountered membership retention problems. Flora declared herself as both a Catholic and a Buddhist; she was baptized when she was at school and took refuge in Chi Lin Nunnery a few years ago. While her Buddhist Master may not have any objections, her priest would probably react in a similar manner as Yvonne's did.

In this chapter, I described some ethnography of Buddhist conversions in Hong Kong. In my interview of forty informants, thirty of them attended either Catholic or Protestant schools (75%). Of these thirty informants, fourteen (or 47% of these, or 35% of the 40 informants) admitted that when they were at school, they had the urge to take the baptism. In actuality, only eight (27% of attendees) of them were baptized; this is 8 out of a total of 40 or 20%. Of these eight, only one said that she remains a Catholic, Ursula. Of the remaining seven who became proselytes, i.e. baptized and then changed to Buddhism, none of them are from Christian families. Three took refuge under the Three Treasures, two think to take refuge is just a ritual, one can't bring herself to take refuge

because she feels that it's like a second marriage, the remaining one said that he hopes to study Buddhism further when he retires because he is too busy. Two of the three that took refuge consider themselves to be both Catholic and Buddhist.

The interesting points about this group of people are that they are either from a fairly flexible and tolerant family, or their families have a history of migration, or the person involved has an international background. Flora has a Thai mother; Yvonne's first husband was Thai, the second British; Abby's father is a returned Peruvian Overseas Chinese; Sabrina's husband is from Shanghai and she is a migrant returned from Canada; Alice is from Shanghai and she is a migrant returned from Australia; Beverly is from Shanghai and she is a migrant returned from the US; Herbert's father is a Kung Fu master and Herbert is a migrant returned from Canada. Their cosmopolitanism suggests not only the basis for them to built up knowledge of different societies, but also a flexibility to provide space for their idiosyncratic choice of beliefs.

For those who did not get baptized as Christians but were attracted to the religion when they were young, they usually indicate parental guidance prevented them from being a Christian. There were seven of these informants: Naomi, a student in Chi Lin, has an atheist father who didn't like his children to have baptism early in life. Leonie was sent to study in a Canadian high school so she didn't have the chance to decide to be

baptized. Olivia's mother kept on asking her to postpone her baptism till after she outgrew her belief in the religion. Wendy, a volunteer in Chi Lin was put off Catholicism by the nuns at her school just before she wanted to get baptized because at the last minute she felt that they didn't like her. Deborah, a student in Chi Lin, did not attend a Catholic secondary school, only a Catholic primary school and thus didn't have an environment in which she could follow up her original interest. Charlotte's mother asked her to wait before getting baptized, and in her two attempts to be baptized, she felt sick, thus prevented her from doing so, Charlotte is a volunteer in Chi Lin. When he wanted to get baptized, Giles' mother asked him to think about it more until finally he changed his mind.

Here are cases in which the majority of parents recognized the influence of the school in their children's beliefs, and actively prevented their children from being baptized by gentle persuasions or alternate arrangements to take their child away from the Christian environment. Interestingly enough, all these people are very successful both academically and professionally, many of them were selected by the Education Department to attend the elite schools. Some were baptized at the tender age of twelve or thirteen when there was no one in their own home sharing the same belief. If the Hong Kong colonial government were successful in warding off the Communist infiltration of

the minds of the Hong Kong youth, they were not doing much to ward off the churches' infiltration.

The parental power versus the teachers' power in influencing the children's decisions was demonstrated by the seven informants above, i.e. Naomi, Leonie, Olivia, Wendy, Deborah, Charlotte and Giles. What about the others who never had the urge to be baptized? The majority of the remaining informants had a family background of atheism or belief in folk religion. The majority of Hong Kong's modern population seems to be well aware of the characteristics of Chinese folk religion. In fact, of my informants listed in Appendix I, 28 are from families that practice folk religion; 7 are from atheist families; 2 are from Buddhist families, and the remaining 3 are each from Protestant, Catholic and Moslem families.

There was no such thing as a 'state religion' when Hong Kong was under colonial rule. Although the Anglican Church had the social status, its impact on the general public seemed to be even less than the Catholics or other Protestant churches, all because the colonial government did allow freedom of religion. On the other hand, there was some indication of how situational power comes to influence the choice of religion. We have seen young children (weak) who follow their parents or school teachers (strong) in the childhood of informants such as Ursula, Alice and Beverly. We have also seen the adult

children (strong) who in turn led aged parents (weak) as was the case with Edwin who led his mother Karen to Buddhism. It works in any religion: Barbara's mother practiced folk religion until Barbara's brother became a Christian minister, then her mother became a Christian, and, according to Barbara, her mother did it to follow the son.

Joseph Nye of Harvard University postulated a concept of soft and hard powers: "Power being the ability to produce a desired outcome. When someone is forced or induced to do something; that is hard power – the use of stick and carrot. Soft power is the ability to secure those outcomes through attraction rather than coercion. It is the ability to shape what others want" (Nye 2003). In beliefs, the direction of social influence is for the weak to follow the strong, it is not necessarily based on coercion, all that needs to happen is that one party internalize that he/she is the weak one: Barbara's mother and Karen followed their sons' beliefs because of the Chinese thinking that when a woman gets old, she obeys the son. When their sons urged them to change their religions, they complied. They accepted that an old woman is a weak person. On the other hand, Yvonne became a Catholic because she wanted to be part of the 'number one' group: It was the attraction of being associated with her teachers and the nuns, the ability to wear the lovely white lace veil that attracted her.

Popular culture also possesses soft power. The 'trend' of the society describes how a

prevailing popular thinking of the mainstream dominates at a specific period. The 'trendy' one is thus in the position to lead or influence the society's thinking, but at the same time this 'trendiness' has the modern character of changing quite rapidly. The inclinations of individuals to be attracted have to be balanced with the collective power structure, the political, economic and historical factors of the society to determine the present. The fact that celebrities such as Alan Tam, Faye Wong, the late Anita Mui, identify themselves with Buddhism, provided a 'trend' that increased the visibility of Buddhism to Hong Kong society. The Tang Dynasty design monastic complex of the Chi Lin Nunnery itself (like the Big Buddha of Lantau Island) performs a similar function. Its high visibility provided the initial attraction or curiosity, and the religion gained popularity based on how the nature of their doctrine can comply with the collective thinking of society at the point in time.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Proselytes: Who was the instigator?

If we go back in history, according to Kenneth Ch'en, when Buddhism was first introduced to China, it was initially accepted as another aspect of Daoism [Taoism]. Describing how Buddhism was perceived during the Han dynasty, Ch'en wrote, "In the eyes of the Han Chinese, Buddhism was but another aspect of Taoism, since its practices and tenets were akin to those of the Taoists. To the Taoists, Buddhism was a new method of obtaining immortality. They felt that the Buddhist nirvāna was no different from Taoist salvation, the arhat like the Taoist *chen-jen* (Ch'en's italic), or pure man." (Ch'en 1964:50). There may be some debates amongst scholars on this subject, but this thesis will not get involved with this argument. There is no debate on the fact that Daoism and Buddhism share generic Chinese religious words. When the emperors of China sponsored eminent monks to go to India, the sutras brought back were translated by court appointed monks, who also acted as editors to ensure the translated doctrines fit into the Chinese context. The resulting translation's terminology was very much influenced by Confucianism. This continued until the Northern Sung Dynasty (Leung 2003). This is part of the explanation for why Buddhism of the Han Transmission has such a distinct

characteristic and contains infusions of Confucianism and Daoism. The official version of the sutra translated into Chinese was not freely transmitted to the general public by religious institutions, but was controlled by the Imperial Palace throughout the centuries to the Sung Dynasty. In fact, the largest monasteries were either supported by the Imperial court, or established with imperial or official endowments of land.

To understand the process of “proselytisation” to Buddhism in Hong Kong, we have to break down the society, and can try to explain why in the past some were converted to Christianity when some remained with folk religion: The society of Hong Kong has the modern metropolitan characteristic that the majority of populations are separated from their places of origin. To accentuate the situation, not many people in Hong Kong know where their ancestral village is located, and for those that know, not very many pass the information on to their descendants. As a result, the memories of family religion passed on to the family members are also very fragmented. This is similar to the Western European characteristic of religion in modernity as described by Hervieu-Léger, “The problem stems from the fact that this complex religious climate reflects the fragmented, shifting and diffuse nature of the modern imagination – an awkward conglomeration of beliefs cobbled together, ...” (Hervieu-Léger 2000:28-29).

The two major groups of proselytes

There are two broad original localities from which the previous generation of Hong Kong emigrants came from: Shanghai and Guangdong province. Depending on the origin of the parents, the beliefs of the descendants tend to be different: for the second-generation migrants whose parents are from Guangdong, the parents themselves usually have negative memories of the Communist regime in China in the economic sense, as many of those Cantonese came from the nearby counties for economic betterment during the failed “Great Leap Forward” or other campaigns instigated by the Communists. They had to leave their home villages because of famine or economic reasons. The majority was from the nearby rural counties and inclined to form the lower strata of the Hong Kong society. Some may have come over as children and some were educated under the Communist regime. Their education background would be more conservatively oriented and tends to be ethnocentric and even xenophobic.

For the second-generation of migrants whose parents were from Shanghai, they were identified as the ‘elite refugees’ by Wong Sui-Lun (Wong 1988). It was this group who brought the technology, capital, and networks that led to the industrialization of Hong Kong. They came to flee persecution. The group was segregated from the Cantonese even

with their own schools in which the original main language used for teaching was Mandarin rather than Cantonese or English because the teachers too were refugees who originally came from other parts of China and do not speak Cantonese. These schools include the Kiangsu-Chekiang College which was founded in 1958 by the Kiangsu and Chekiang Residents' (H.K.) Association. Much like the situation described by Emily Honig: "people from specific local origins occupying particular niches in an urban labor market ... gather together in particular urban neighborhoods" (Honig: 1996). This incidentally could be one of the reasons why some Shanghainese who came to Hong Kong encountered no major cultural difficulties; they were living in enclaves known as "Little Shanghai" in the North Point area during the 50's and 60's, where Beverly lived during her childhood (The original Shanghainese migrants moved out over the years, and have been replaced by Fujianese). In general, being migrants from cosmopolitan Shanghai, their viewpoints were broader and they were more aware of Western cultures.

The cases above demonstrate that the old boundary between the Shanghainese and Cantonese in the 50's and 60's Hong Kong was more than just language and life-style: there were also the social strata associated with the original social status of the first generation migrants. The Shanghainese came to Hong Kong armed with economic, cultural, social and human capitals. They came with their money and machinery (Wong

Sui-Lun wrote that some Shanghainese actually divert the shipment of their equipment to Hong Kong when they sensed the political problems developing in Shanghai). These people were from a cosmopolitan city compared to the “back-water” status Hong Kong was then. They had a social and commercial network established in Shanghai. They were educated, skilled and experienced. It was an elite class on its own that descended on Hong Kong. They accelerated the territory’s march towards modernity. At the same time, this group has the tendency to be more liberal minded and the parents that can accept their children’s conversion to Christianity. This was the case with Sabrina, Alice and Beverley. Whereas for the cases of Naomi, Olivia, Charlotte and Giles, even though their parents recognized that the Christian schools in Hong Kong were good for their children, they would do things in their power to prevent their children from being baptized, some by soft persuasion, some simply forbidding it. This difference in attitude of the parents, created different pools of proselytes: one from a pool of ex-Christians, another from a pool of ex-folk religion practitioners.

Social Leveling in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Government provides nine years mandatory free education for the population of school age which narrows the education gap amongst the different social

strata of Hong Kong. In the past, school children who did well in their primary schools were able to enter elite secondary schools. That was what happened to my informants, Daisy, Giles, Charlotte, Emily and Julian. All of these five attended Christian secondary schools. None of them have an elite background, but there was a practice by the Education Department of the Colonial government in the 50's and 60's that when a child did well in the public Secondary School Entrance Exam, the child would be put in an elite school. While providing an opportunity for social mobility, this actually caused some hardship for the school children, because many could be from government schools which have Chinese curriculum while most elite schools have an English curriculum. As a result, the schoolchildren usually experienced extreme hardship trying to catch up in their English in addition to the awareness of the income gap. An example of this is the experience of a wife of an informant. She told me about her utter frustration when she sat in the English curriculum secondary school classroom, not knowing what was being said the whole day. When there was a religious holiday, she didn't know enough English to understand what had been said, and went back to school to find it completely empty of students. She felt very humiliated and remembers it decades later: All because she did very well in her government primary school and was sent to St. Paul's Convent School, which even now is still an elite school. A few of my informants had a similar experience

and these difficulties prevented them from totally enjoying and accepting their secondary schools' teachings. One of the results of the experience was that they were not as convinced with the Christian religion teachings at school.

The education system of colonial Hong Kong did succeed in social leveling. This social leveling also affects the beliefs of the population. Cheng Sea Ling contended that the newfound confidence of Hongkongers came from the Cantonese who during the 60's and 70's made up the majority of the working class. Hong Kong identity was mainly Cantonese: "In the 1970's, the formation of a modern Hong Kong identity as distinct from Mainland Chinese or Taiwanese, can be discerned in the media. Cantonese pop songs (pioneered by Sam Hui) triumphed over Mandarin pop songs and gained popularity with lyrics that marked a local identity and a common aspiration" (Cheng S. L. 1997:60). In their search for identity, Buddhism became their choice partly because of their defiance of authority. According to Daisy,

In my secondary school ..., there was something I disliked [about Catholicism], and that's their idea that God selects the chosen people, I felt that that was very unfair. If You can choose me, why can't I choose You? On what basis do You choose me? I was very much against this, so I have never believed (in Catholicism). Then there was the original sin; I have nothing to do with it, so I didn't buy their doctrine.

Irene has a similar argument; she described the period after her husband died of a heart attack. She was very depressed and had sought help from a Catholic priest and a Buddhist monk, the former because she studied in Catholic schools and the latter because her husband tended to lean towards Chinese religion. She found the priest continuously asked her to pray for forgiveness, while the monk would listen and console her. She resented the Catholic doctrine's assumption that she was at fault and therefore needed to seek forgiveness as compared with the Buddhist doctrine which comforted her. She said,

Buddhism is more reasonable, Christians use force. Buddhism is more accommodating, it's [the doctrine is] very peaceful, very pure; Christianity is very harsh. Like if you believe in Jesus you would be saved and go to heaven, I don't think its right. I've meet many Christians that are very hard sell [i.e., pushy on the religion]. I don't like it: Too pushy. They made it sound as if they are the only religion, any other will go to hell, and I think many things are not right. Buddhism is very accommodating; they don't have a rule that excludes you from another religion. Christians can not have that. After listening to Buddhism, you feel comfortable.

Herbert has a similar attitude even though he is not totally committed to Buddhism yet. He does not believe in the meanings of Catholic ritual any more, and resists the monotheist doctrine of Christianity. He said,

My second sister would write long letters to me and tried to convert me

from a Catholic to Protestant. That was over ten years ago, I told her, that as long as we are all properly religious, we all believe in God, it's just that we give different names to it, Catholics call ours God, Protestants may call theirs Jesus, Buddhist call theirs Buddha, Islam call theirs whatever. God is in the middle, you are applying different interpretations. I would not say the others are wrong, but why do you want to tell me that my interpretation is wrong. Maybe we are all correct. Just because you are correct doesn't mean that my interpretation is wrong. We just use different semantics. ...Over the years I have been thinking, I am inclined to be a Buddhist. Versus other religion, they talk more about self-discipline... If you did something bad, later you go home and look at yourself in the mirror, then you put your head down, because inside each person's heart there is Buddha or God, God would tell you that you have done nasty things today, even if you did confession ten times, its meaningless, because the God in your heart will tell you that you are a naughty boy today.

In my research, it is easy to detect the different belief intensity of the informants at different stages in their life history. I would define belief intensity as how far the person or the group of persons is willing deviate from the mainstream (as they know it) to adhere to a religion's doctrinal requirements. For example, Hong Kong society is well known for its orientation towards economic gains. Christians have the obligation of donating some if not 10% of one's income as tithe. There are no research data on this, but personally, I

have some doubt as to whether the normal modern day Christians in Hong Kong, even the devout ones, would donate a significant ratio of their income on a recurring basis.

The Concept of Belief Intensity Cycles

We have to ask how the proselytes would rationalize to themselves their change of belief to do so we should consider the cultural stage we are in. We are in a period of modernity defined by three main characteristics: individualization, pluralization and fluidity (Hervieu-Leger 2000: 40). These characteristics are in abundance in Hong Kong and amongst the informants of this study. We have to investigate how individualization and pluralization fit into the subject of our study in this chapter. First, I'd like to discuss how 'fluidity' fits in this thesis. The functions of religions have been defined by Cheng Kin-sang (Cheng 2004) as psychological needs, intellectual needs, social needs, existential needs, practical effects on everyday life, healing, creativity and welfare needs. One can explain the reasons for belief in many different ways. Humans are so complex that each individual is able to rationalize his or her idiosyncratic activities to himself or herself. But how could we explain that one person or group of persons can be inconsistent in their religion? Kertzer mentioned that situational pressures could affect people's behavior (Kertzer 1998: 96-97). For my informants, while the needs to belief are similar,

the context and situational pressure change at different stage in life. The person's choice of religion is to alleviate the situational pressure the person encounters in that particular context.

It is not that human beings are fickle in nature, the reality is that they change consistently in tastes and needs depending on the situations; that is why products sold in commercial markets have cycles in popularity. For example, according to a person who sold brandy in Hong Kong for over 24 years, there was a time when French brandy was essential in any Chinese social meal in Hong Kong. According to him, to Chinese man in Hong Kong at that time, brandy had the image of machismo and virility. To socially demonstrate his masculinity, a Chinese man in Hong Kong could down at least 8 to 12 fluid ounces in one meal. At the peak, Hong Kong imported over a million cases of brandy per annum from France. That was in the late 1980's. Then it dropped to about 300,000 cases per annum. The taste of Hongkongers switched to wine. Product-cycles are related to belief intensity cycles: Many Chinese men in Hong Kong during the late 80's believed that it was socially necessary for them to demonstrate his masculinity, so to drink brandy was one way to do it. The belief was intensive to the point that they made Hong Kong the highest per capita import area in the world. But soon, the belief intensity reduced as the image of a less dominant male became more chic, wine soon replaces

brandy as the popular social drink..

In the matter of religion, the social need to identify with the dominant party increases when a person feels relatively weak in the situation one is in. As mentioned, seven of my informants converted to Catholicism when they were at school. Their belief in Catholicism was most intensive when they were surrounded by social needs to the point that they decided to get baptized and participated in the religion's activities. By the time most of them left school, the social needs environment no longer existed, so their interests died down. There was no enforcement of the practice of the religion in the new environments they found themselves in, and there were no institutions to enforce religion. On the other hand, had the enforcement continued the person would remain in the religion: An example is Ursula who was baptized in her youth. Even though she admitted that she no longer practices the religion, she would not renounce her religion because her family is Catholic and enforces the symbols of the religion at home.

The society of Hong Kong has a recent history of rapid changes and development. During the 60's there were mass population in-flows from China, and in the 70's there was rapid industrial growth. During the early 1980's, China implemented their 'Four Modernization Plan', and Hong Kong participated. But political uncertainty for 1997 caused massive migration away from the territory. By the end of the decade there was

euphoria in the society because Hong Kong benefited from China's economic growth. Then in June 4th, 1989, Hong Kong panicked en masse. In the 1990's, the political dispute heated up between China and Britain before 1997. Then the economy went into recession during the Asian Economic crisis and did not seem to be able to get itself out of it. Once again the society entered into tension. The Hong Kong economy and confidence recovered a little bit recently (July 2006) but the income gap is still a problem. All these political and economic cycles in the society would enforce the belief fluidity of Hongkongers. Many of my informants demonstrated that they have no qualms in changing their religious beliefs in different periods of their lives. Few ex-Catholics, except Abby, exhibit external signs of guilt for converting to Buddhism.

The population of Hong Kong at this point in time still enjoys freedom of religion, but the velocity of changes in the society is so great that a person's religion can change at similar rate as the person's situation, and it could be due to any one of the needs Cheng mentioned. In modern days, the ability to remain flexible is important to cope with changes. As Abby said, "I will not tell others that I am a 100% Buddhist, because I do not know enough. In addition, it's like someone who has married, married to Catholic but now divorced. If I "remarry" then I don't know [if it will last], because I think religion is quite ugly. As an institution, there are many human relations involved, human weakness

and others.”

In reality, these Hongkongers can be described as agnostic theists, a term defined by Smith: “The agnostic theist believes in the existence of god, but maintains that the nature of god is unknown” (Smith 1989: 10). There is a tendency to say that any religion that is *zhengxin*, i.e., of the ‘proper belief’ and leads a person towards virtue, is good. Amongst my informants, they are knowledgeable about different kinds of beliefs. The problem is that they cannot be sure which is ‘the true’ belief. Thus Irene, when her husband died, sought moral support from both a Catholic priest and a Buddhist monk. Rachel, a devout Buddhist and a very active volunteer of Chi Lin said, “All religions that have a few thousands of years’ history with root and strength and have identifiable characteristics, I don’t think they are bad, i.e., there shouldn’t be anything wrong with it, whatever religion it may be, be it Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Islam or Daoism.” Herbert’s idea of god described in the earlier part of this chapter shows that he is another who is very strong on the idea that we can not be sure what the ‘real god’ is like. In effect, all my informants except Ursula have multi-religious exposure; they are either from families that practice folk religion, studied in Christian schools, and converted to Buddhism, were converted from atheism, or were from a Moslem family or a family that practiced cult religion. In other words, they are knowledgeable about many religions and as a result can

only be a relativist on the issue. The point of contention is what they choose to believe at a specific time.

The basis of the concept of Belief Intensity Cycles is that people of cosmopolitan societies such as Hong Kong are familiar with, educated about, or have contact with, many religions plus their histories and doctrines. Most believe that there could be some supernatural being but may not be sure, particularly if the modern society is based on science and rationality. As a result, they become agnostic theists. Their belief intensity in each doctrine is determined by the needs the person feels and the situational pressure at a particular point in time. The multiple beliefs and values of the person would determine the choice the person makes in their participation in religious activities.

To illustrate, we can take the example of Sabrina. She never had the urge to be baptized as a Protestant even though she studied in a Protestant school. Her mother practiced folk religion, and the Protestant teachers of her school were not very active in converting young children. Her belief intensity in Catholicism increased because she wanted her son to be enrolled in a Catholic school. At a later time, this was replaced by belief intensity in Buddhism, nevertheless, she maintained, "I feel Christianity is good, my children received good training. When my children were overseas I told my children that they had to go to church every week otherwise I'd be angry, so my second son even

volunteered to help in the church. [But,] I don't go to church now."

She talked about her taste in music and how it changed from her preference for pop music when she was young (she was truant from school once so that she could see the Beatles when they came to Hong Kong). "Now I like Buddhist music, the Sanskrit sutra recitals or some of the songs of our period [i.e. classic rock], the less noisy ones. There is a change in ones' life. Very simply put, it's mainly my personal growth as I mature. Things that you see and experience change according to your age. I would look for things myself." Her conversion to Buddhism was due to her seeking for answers after she had witnessed some drastic changes which occurred in the lives of her close friends. She explained,

My questions about life grew. Is life fair? I couldn't feel it. The young ones have different experiences: why adults are like that, why do some couples split apart for seemingly no reason. There were many life experiences that I could observe, I have questions. However, when you ask, the church could not provide the answer. Someone told me to leave it to God. Leave what? I couldn't answer, that's when the seed sprouted. Once I saw a Buddhist book in my friend's place. It was just there and I just read it. It seems to work!

That happened when she was in her forties. Her belief intensity in Buddhism increased and she began to ask Buddhist monks questions, then she attended Buddhist classes. A few years ago, Sabrina took refuge and became a Buddhist. She is an example

of a person with awareness of different religions; she picked and chose different religions at different times as her belief intensity varied. She stressed that she is still a Catholic and offered candles in churches in Europe when she visited them, but she believes in Buddhism more strongly.

Sabrina is not the only example. Camilla and Emily joined Yiguan Dao, because a group of elderly people knelt around them and swore that they would not get up until Camilla and, later, Emily joined this new religious movement (NRM). Both Camilla and Emily submitted to the pressure because of the Chinese custom of respect to the elderly. They joined Yiguan Dao based on an internalized cultural pressure, but the original intention to visit the Buddhist hall was to seek an answer to their basic religious needs. Their belief intensity towards Yiguan Dao was high enough to remain loyal to the group, that is, until they found Rev. Xingyun, towards whom their belief intensity became higher. It was the relatively higher belief intensity on zhengxin Buddhism that finalized their conversion.

One can argue that the level of belief intensity describes any person's, or a group of people's, confidence level that, whatever they believe in, will produce the result they aspire to. I would argue that the collective beliefs of modern societies towards the words of political leaders or religious leaders, all demonstrate belief intensity cycle

characteristics; these are expressed in the opinion polls or democratic elections when they are available. Belief is an aspiration, be it life after death or ascension to nirvana, it is an intangible that requires rituals to be performed by the person involved so as to convince the person that he/she may attain the final goal. When a person practice independent religiosity mentioned in chapter 2, the persons themselves control the pace of their religious development. The cases mentioned in this thesis are all phenomena of modernity: its existence is for protection of one's individuality, therefore Edwin (page 55 of this thesis) is proud that he can "remain firm" in rejecting requests to join Buddhist halls by other people.

The Role of Chi Lin Nunnery

In the era in which Buddha lived, India was composed of many states. The people of India were living in a multi-national world; one can speculate that this could be one of the reasons why Buddha's teaching was very accommodating of diversity. 21st Century Hong Kong is a very pluralistic metropolis, beliefs are fluid and at the same time, modern Buddhism as a religion is itself very diverse, some may even say fragmented.

The Chi Lin Nunnery belongs to the Pureland sect, yet they encourage the teaching of different sects and Schools of Buddhism in Chi Lin's Cultural Center. This reflects

their accommodating attitude and suggests a wish for a Buddhist ecumenism. The nunnery has a Sri Lankan Buddhist teacher, a Theravada, even though the nunnery itself is Mahayana. Chi Lin's Cultural Center has classes on three transmissions, the Southern Transmission, the Tibetan Transmission and the Han Transmission, which grew out of the Northern Transmission. According to Rev. Z, the essences of the transmissions are the same but the practices are different. This attitude accommodates the plurality of the modernized society of Hong Kong and is implemented in to the Chi Lin Cultural Center's curriculum.

In addition to the imposing Tang-inspired monastery complex, the Nunnery's involvement with the Hammer Hill Road Public Park, and education and social services, all make it a rather secularized institution. The nuns, rather than being secluded, are involved with the running of their schools and home for the elderly. They are highly educated and articulate. They speak fluent English and are involved with international projects such as assisting in the design of a monastery in Singapore (also built in Tang Dynasty design).

The organized teaching of the Nunnery through its Cultural Center is an important aspect of its activities. In the opening ceremony of Chi Lin Nunnery's Evening School, Rev. Wan Fan of the Nunnery revealed the history of how the Evening School was

conceptualized. One thing they considered, she said, was globalization, and I presume, competition. Chi Lin perceived a major change to Buddhism in Hong Kong during the 80's. She said that they could not only look internally and stay out of the change; there was a globalization of knowledge, and moralities. Rev. Wan Fan said:

What's important to Chi Lin's decision is that we do not restrict teaching by sangha only, the Board of Director and the teachers allow such to continue in the development of the awareness of Chinese, Buddhist, Western and others on the teachings about life. Regardless of the disciplines, all contributed to humanity. Chi Lin is an open space. Some people asked why we do not run a Buddhist Institute. The issue is that the sangha is not superior in broadcasting knowledge. If there are no sangha available that can attain the knowledge level to teach, why not accept laypeople to teach? Unlike Taiwan, Hong Kong does not have that many sangha. There would not be any attendance if the Cultural Center is run as a Buddhist Institute.

Chi Lin Nunnery is trying to adapt to the changes of modern society. But what is important in the above statement is that it is an indication that the Nunnery is open enough to accept laypersons to make up the deficiency in supply of Buddhist teachers in Hong Kong. The significance of this is that it involves the laity more closely in teaching Buddhism. Sangha, i.e. monks and nuns, are supposed to have a sacred position to Buddhists because they are the teachers of sutras. If laities are non-professional, sangha

are professional, but Chi Lin has accepted that laities can be teachers as well.

It is not only Buddhists of the Pureland School that are attracted to classes in Chi Lin Nunnery. According to Naomi, she follows the Lesser Vehicle Buddhism (Theravada); she attends classes in Chi Lin Nunnery because she thinks that it's close to where she lives. She said,

It's close. I want to learn more. I have been to other Buddhist halls; I think they [Chi Lin Nunnery] are more professional, more systematic. And as a place they really want to professionally and systematically introduce Buddhism. Compared to other places, there are Buddhist talks, but the talks would prefer to adjust to the age of the people to design their program. They invite speakers there, but their topics are not as academic. Not so in Chi Lin, here they set up guidelines and you have to follow, it's more academic here.

Conclusion

In a high velocity, fluid and pluralistic metropolis such as Hong Kong, the beliefs of the people are cyclical based on what the person is experiencing. The belief intensity cycle is rapid and the oscillation becomes prominent mainly because the focus of the person involved need to shift so as to be in-tune with the rapidly changing environment. In the case of Hong Kong, because of its colonial past, some of the population is exposed

to mandatory Christian religious training in an early stage which caused the belief intensity of that religion to be high. Yet when China open up in the 1980's and trade with Taiwan via Hong Kong, the more frequent contact with Taiwanese travelers, allowed the Hong Kong people to be exposed to the Taiwan Buddhist Organization. The Buddhist influence innate in Chinese Literature allowed these charismatic Buddhist leaders of Taiwan to invoke Hong Kong people's interests in Buddhism, and the modernized Buddhism that the three leaders, Ven. Xingyun, Ven. Zhengyan and Ven. Shengyan practice were imported to Hong Kong.

The Taiwan Buddhist Organizations and Chi Lin are basically adapting to fulfill modern needs. The Taiwanese leaders with their teachings (which fit into to modern societies' values), provide attractive alternatives to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association's 'Old Monks Club' and the Po Lin Monastery's 'ferocious' political monk images. These Taiwanese leaders, with their written language shared with Hongkongers, have rekindled Hong Kong's young Buddhists' interest by appealing to modern tastes and offering more rational doctrines which keep in touch with modern globalized values, negating the images imposed since the early Chinese Republican days of the May 4th Movement, when Buddhism together with Confucianism and Daoism were considered as the cause of China's decline. Buddhism as a Chinese religion was not the dominant

religion during the colonial era. But with the availability of books written by Taiwanese Buddhists leaders, the annual teaching of Ven. Xingyun in Hong Kong presented in modern day settings enables Hongkongers to view Buddhism as a modern religion.

The Chi Lin Nunnery built a symbol that provides collective meanings through the projection of a reminder of Chinese culture. They utilize their new found fame to promote Chinese culture that is relevant to the teachings of Buddhism to interest new students. The students listen to zhengxin Buddhism and don't feel that there is any prejudice in the teachings against a different Buddhist transmission. As a result, their professionalism is respected. Chi Lin's interest in promoting Chinese culture through the Hammer Hill Road Garden project is relevant to their vocation: with the thousands of years of mutual assimilation, Chinese culture itself displays enough fragments of Buddhism that Han Transmission Buddhism is very much intertwined with Chinese cultural heritage.

Self proclaimed Buddhists in Hong Kong display diversities in their methods of beliefs. Some tends to be practicing folk Buddhism at one end, whereas others tend to approach the religion in an intellectual zhengxin Buddhism. To reconcile why some modern Buddhists still display a trace of '*mixin*', Albert, the Chan (Zen) instructor, said,

In Buddhism, we are more accommodative. If the person truly has not arrived to the quality, but there is good intention 善意 toward Buddhism,

this is the kind of thing that even the Buddha would welcome. It was recorded in the Primitive Buddhism Sutra: there were many non-Buddhists who, on many occasions, after the discussions [with Buddha], these non-Buddhists would leave very happily without being converted as Buddhist. Buddha would let them be. Buddha was very open-minded. Primitive Buddhism pivoted on the Four Noble Truths; if the person can understand the Four Truths, the ignorance suffered by the person will be solved. Buddhism was not really a religion. Even Buddha didn't force his teaching on people who had not attained the quality level.

The 'quality level' he is referring to is the understanding and acceptance of Buddha's teaching as recorded in the sutra. For this study, I have interviewed informants whose understandings and interpretations of the teachings of Buddhism are diverse; they make declarations and perform activities based upon their own understandings. Indeed, if the objective anthropology's study of religion in a society is to study its main features, the kaleidoscopic character of Buddhists in Hong Kong is worthy of further study.

I have mentioned earlier in the thesis that the rulers of China throughout history have been tolerant to different religions only when the latter do not impose a challenge to their rules, or better still if the religion reinforced the rulers by acknowledging that they were mandated by heaven to rule. Because of the social cohesive property of religion, the mixing of religion into politics is not unique to China. Throughout history, rulers have

either consciously or unconsciously used religion as a political tool. But it worked only when the subjects themselves believed in and chose to belong to the religion. In the modern capitalist society such as Hong Kong, most people are individualistic and tend not to want to belong to religious institutions, giving way to more time spent on day to day economic competition. Hongkongers with their culture dominated by economics have projected their *laissez-faire* attitude on to their beliefs.

Most Hong Kong Buddhists have a background of folk religion. They recognize folk religion reflects the historical Chinese imperial ruling structure. There is no doubt that folk religion is a Chinese religion. On the other hand, Hongkongers are sophisticated enough to recognize that folk religion is out of sync with the modern world and Confucian structuralism is out of touch with modern individualism. Of the three major Chinese institutional religions mentioned by C. K. Yang (Yang 1991), only Buddhism's doctrine was flexible enough to allow it to fit in to modern meanings. The significance of this religion to the individual believers is its doctrine's ability to adapt to modernity. The significance of this religion to the Central Government is its ability to enforce the 'Chineseness' of the believers.

At time of writing, the Hong Kong Government is proposing a school management reform in which more parents and government officials will be included in school boards.

This is interpreted by the churches as a challenge to their control of schools that are affiliated with them. If religion's influence is removed from these schools, what will replace it? Some 'patriotic' public figures have advocated nationalist teachings in schools. Indeed, as Hongkongers are looking more and more towards the North, will nationalism enjoy a belief intensity increase?

The Central Government has long extended their goodwill towards the Buddhists in Hong Kong by cooperating in the construction of the Big Buddha and the Chi Lin Nunnery. The motive of the Central Government's cooperation with the Hong Kong Buddhist institutions would be to evoke the collective cultural memory of the territory through popular and harmless channels. The exhibition of the Buddha's finger and other Buddhist relics in May 2004 demonstrates that the government still wishes to maintain the good will of Hong Kong Buddhists, and we see the Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong declare their patriotism in public in reciprocate.

In December 6, 2003, the Oriental Daily (in the Property Investment Section) reported that Ching Kok Lin headed by Rev. Kok Kwong, also of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, proposed to erect a 250 feet (76.9 meter) bronze Guan Yin in Ting Kok, Tai Po. It would be much taller than the Big Buddha (26 meter) in Lantau and would have been the second tallest Guan Yin statue in the world. It was announced as a

potential tourist spot by the newspaper and would be financed by the local businessman Li Ka-shing. Unfortunately, in October 15, 2005, the Town Planning Board put the project on hold after receiving 220 objections from green groups and residents of the local low-density housing who said that it is more a tourist attraction than a religious statue because of the proposed car park for 140 vehicles and 15 coaches.

I do not think that it was blocked not just because cooperation with Buddhist institution is less useful to the government. It was blocked because the Hong Kong government is now being more responsive to the public opinion that put environmental protection on higher priority. With the recent meteoric growth in the country, the Central Government now holds the economic trump card, and played it well by allowing Hong Kong to participate in their growth, e.g., by allowing Hong Kong to enjoy tax free trading with Mainland China through CEPA.. The Guan Yin project was blocked because the HKSAR government is changing tactic, and the need to rely on fostering cultural memory to promote social unity is less.

We have seen how the Hong Kong Government plans to reduce the Christian institutions' influence in Hong Kong by proposing changes in school management. Buddhist run schools will suffer similar fate. Buddhist institutions in Hong Kong should maximize their available opportunity and build themselves up as much as possible so that

they are in a strong position to face the ultimate change of situation. In June 3 2006, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) Education Supplement reported Rev. Sik Hin-Hung as saying that religious education is facing a crisis. SCMP reported him to have said, “The religious education element in the liberal studies course is too narrow. It is too objective Faith should be taught from a religious perspective.” The same article also said that the introduction of the three-year senior secondary curriculum in three years time would reduce the room for students to take religious education. The Cultural Center of Chi Lin Nunnery will be in the position to tackle this problem.

During the colonial era, power was identified with Westerners; Western culture and religions were associated with social leaders. Ever since the handover of sovereignty, power is identified with mainland China. Gradually, Chinese culture and religion have become objects to be followed. The Christian churches, which provided such valuable social support to the colonial government, are now presented in the media as one of the opposition parties against the HKSAR government, particularly when church leaders such as Bishop (now Cardinal) Zen of the Catholic Church, would reprimand government policy, rather than working as partners with the government. On the other hand, Buddhist institutions that were marginalized during the colonial era can offer themselves as partners to promote Chinese religion and culture, if not nationalism.

When Hong Kong was in the initial post-handover era, the Central Government is still seeking to promote unity by invoking the collective memory of a religion that plays a more influential role in the Chinese culture. The construction of the Big Buddha in Lantau Island and the Chi Lin Nunnery's wooden monastery complex, together with the exhibition of the national treasure relics in Hong Kong mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, could only have taken place with the goodwill of the Chinese Central government. The Central Government's goodwill would be in line with the agenda of fostering cultural awareness, then patriotism, and then, hopefully, nationalism. If initially after the handover Hongkongers could not relate to a Socialist Central Government, Buddhist institutions were probably identified as being closer to the historical Chinese culture, the memory of which the Central Government would like to evoke. Buddhists are normally not a socially mobile group of people, but the new political situations do allow them to immerge from their former position of being marginalized to that of being politically recognized. In this thesis, we have studied the dynamics of how the some believers negotiate from a former Western leaning religious identity to a new Chinese leaning religious identity. The Chi Lin Nunnery as well as the modernized Buddhism from Taiwan provided the vehicles for this transformation.

Beliefs as well as religion are intricate components of culture. Nationalism as a

belief in Hong Kong is still not at a high enough intensity level for the Government. The Central Government arranged the visit of China's first astronauts, the visit of the Performing PLA Troupe, the PLA military parade in August 2004, the various measures to help Hong Kong's battered economy, the softening towards Hong Kong's democratic activists, the parade of the 2004 Athens Olympic medal winners in September 2004, and the willingness of the Beijing Olympic Committee to release the equestrian competition to Hong Kong so that Hong Kong can participate in holding the 2008 Olympic, all are measures to cultivate good will and nationalism in Hong Kong. The question will be: At the point in time when the Central Government does succeed in increasing the belief intensity of nationalism in Hong Kong, what value can the Buddhist institutions add in cultivating cultural memories in the future? Will their value to the Hong Kong Government ultimately become similar to the temples in mainland China, i.e., to generate tourist income?

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Number	Pseudonyms	Employment	Summary List of Informants				Original Family religion	Religion of school attended	Any urge to join school religion
			Category	Age at time of interview	Sex	Education level	Converted from		
1	Abby	Retired secondary	Chi Lin volunteer	51	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Folk Religion	Y
2	Barbara	Tea House sales assistant	Dong Mi Zhung	45	F	Secondary	Cult	Folk Religion	N
3	Camilla	Buddhist Hall Caretaker	Dong Mi Zhung	40	F	Primary	Cult	Folk Religion	N
4	Albert	Buddhist course translator	Chi Lin Evening School	44	M	Primary	None	None	N
5	Daisy	Factory Manager	Chi Lin Volunteer	50	F	Tertiary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	N
6	Edith	Unemployed secretary	Chi Lin Student	40	F	Tertiary	None	None	N
7	Faye	Secondary School Teacher	Dong Mi Zhung	36	F	Tertiary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	N
8	Barney	Emily's husband	Dong Mi Zhung	56	M	Primary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	N
9	Georgiana	Advertising Copy Writer	Dong Mi Zhung	26	F	Tertiary	Atheist	Moslem	N
10	Hazel	Airline Cabinet Attendant	Chi Lin devotee	42	F	Secondary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	N

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Summary List of Informants										
Number	Pseudonyms	Employment	Category	Age at time of interview	Sex	Education level	Converted from	Original Family religion	Religion of school attended	Any urge to join school religion
11	Cecil	Businessman	Chi Lin devotee	44	M	Secondary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	None	N
12	Irene	Retired stock broker	Others	60	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Catholic	N
13	Jackie	Retired artist	Others	60	F	Tertiary	None	None	Catholic & Protestant	N
14	Karen	Retired mother of Edwin	Chi Lin ex-volunteer	62	F	Primary	Cult	None	None	N
15	Daniel	Office Assistant	Others	42	M	Secondary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	Catholic	N
16	Leonie	Tax Accountant	Fo Xiang	46	F	Tertiary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
17	Mabel	Law student	Chi Lin devotee	27	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Protestant	N
18	Naomi	Business executive	Chi Lin Student	40	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Protestant	Y
19	Edwin	Physiotherapist	Chi Lin ex-volunteer	34	M	Tertiary	Cult	Cult	Daoist	N
20	Olivia	University professor	Chi Lin student	49	F	Post Grad	None	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
21	Pandora	Yoga instructor	Chi Lin student	60	F	Tertiary	None	Protestant	None	N

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Number	Pseudonyms	Employment	Summary List of Informants					Original Family religion	Religion of school attended	Any urge to join school religion
			Category	Age at time of interview	Sex	Education level	Converted from			
22	Fred	Hotel Executive	Others	39	M	Tertiary	None	Buddhist	None	N
23	Rachel	PR executive	Chi Lin Volunteer	40	F	Secondary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	Buddhist	N
24	Sabrina	Housewife	Chi Lin visitor/ Fo Xiang	55	F	Secondary	Catholic	Folk Religion	Protestant	N
25	Thelma	Student/part time office	Others	25	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Catholic & Protestant	N
26	Ursula	Government Senior Officer	Chi Lin visitor	46	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Y
27	Valerie	University professor	Chi Lin student	48	F	Post Grad	None	Folk Religion	Protestant	N
28	Wendy	Senior Government Officer	Chi Lin Volunteer	50	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
29	Yvonne	Housewife	Chi Lin Student	49	F	Secondary	Catholic	None	Catholic	Y
30	Zara	Accountant	Chi Lin devotee	23	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Protestant	N
31	Giles	Head of Medical School	Others	59	M	Post Grad	Buddhist	None	Protestant	Y

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Summary List of Informants										
Number	Pseudonyms	Employment	Category	Age at time of interview	Sex	Education level	Converted from	Original Family religion	Religion of school attended	Any urge to join school religion
32	Alice	Housewife	Chi Lin devotee	55	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Buddhist	Catholic	Y
33	Beverley	Housewife	Others	55	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
34	Charlotte	Government Senior Officer	Chi Lin Volunteer	51	F	Tertiary	Folk Religion	Folk Religion	Protestant	Y
35	Deborah	Retired Business Executive	Chi Lin Student	50	F	Tertiary	None	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
36	Herbert	Bank Director	Others	50	M	Tertiary	Catholic	Folk Religion	Catholic	Y
37	Emily	Tea House Owner	Dong Mi Zhung	45	F	Secondary	Cult	Folk Religion	Protestant	N
38	Ian	Tourist Guide	Others	39	M	Secondary	None	Folk Religion	Catholic & Protestant	N
39	Flora	Lawyer and law firm partner	Chi Lin	47	F	Tertiary	Catholic	Atheist	Catholic	Y
40	Julian	University professor	Mi Zhung	48	M	Post Grad	None	Folk Religion	Protestant	N

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